Buffy the Vampire Slayer™

JOSS WHEDON
ANDREW CHAMBLISS
GEORGES JEANTY
JANE ESPENSON
KARL MOLINE

SEASON 9 VOLUME 3

WILL MAGIC BE REBORN?

When she is suddenly transported in mid-slay, Buffy finds that the Siphon has regained his strength and is becoming an increasingly powerful adversary—and she has been recruited by Illyria and a mystical council to be part of a team brought together to take him down before he absorbs whatever remnants of magic he can find.

Meanwhile, the world's loss of magic hits closer to home for Buffy when Dawn falls seriously ill. Buffy's discovery that Dawn's life is in danger brings her home, and the surprising, yet timely, return of Willow brings the team back together. The battle with the Siphon is put aside—or so they think—while the team focuses on finding a supernatural cure for Dawn. Traveling to the Deeper Well, Buffy and her friends will fight new enemies and old in a battle that will change the shape of the world . . .

As Buffy and her team fight to save Dawn, Billy the Vampire Slayer fights his own crucial battle with the help of his Watcher and the Slayer Anaheed to save his small town of Santa Rosita from a plague of zompires.

"Moline's pencils are tight and well-shaped, and Espenson's characters sound like real people with real problems that also just happen to fight vampires."

—COMIC BOOK RESOURCES

"Chambliss balances out the plot's heavier themes with a sprinkling of lighthearted frivolity . . . Billy, the much-discussed boy Slayer, sees his own character arc come to a significant turning point amidst all the zompire madness. *BTVS* has always been about imparting real-world life lessons with the aid of a few fantastical creatures."

—IGN

"*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 9 #25 is exactly the finale [the season] deserves. It's a culmination of this volume that leaves me grinning ear to ear as I find myself with no choice but to write: Bring on Season 10!"

—UNLEASH THE FANBOY

DARK HORSE BOOKS

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the Vampire Slayer™

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DARK HORSE BOOKS

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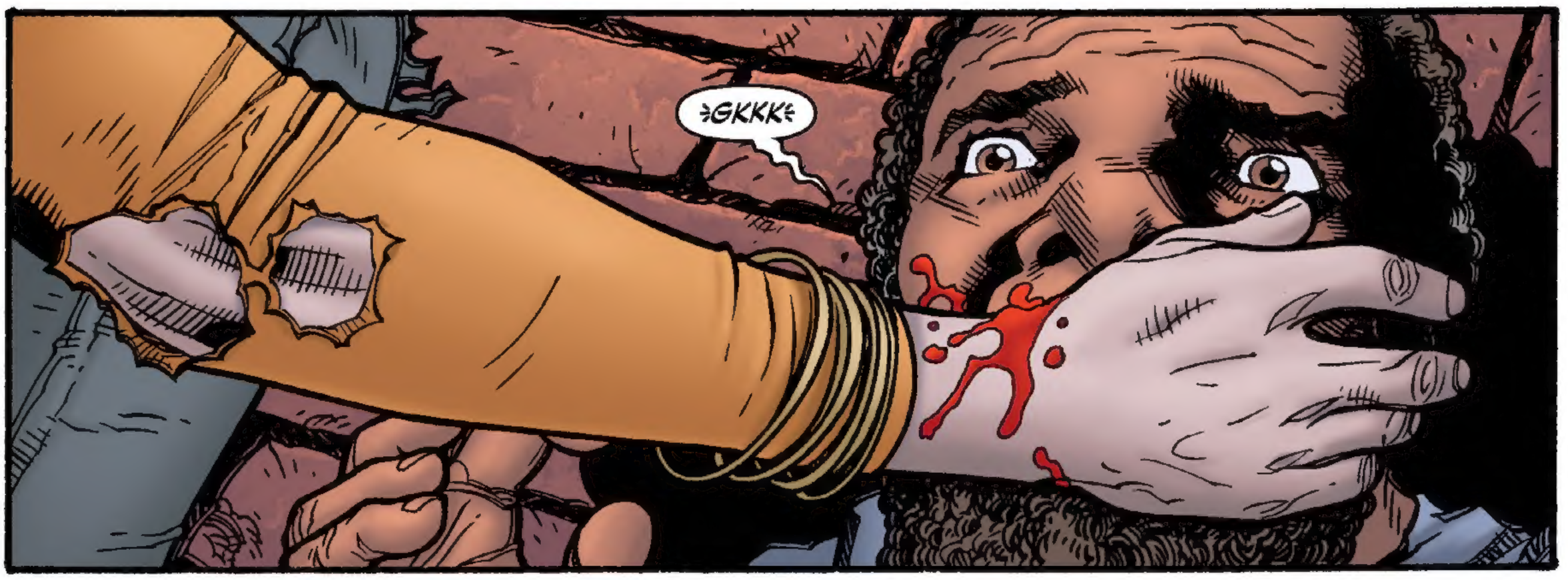
GRRRRRRR!

GAAARRRR!
...HELP...


GKKK

KRAK

WELCOME TO THE TEAM

PART ONE

I'M GETTING REALLY TIRED OF CLEANING UP AFTER YOUR SIRING SPREE.

HEY, DUMB AND MUCH DUMBER.
HE DOESN'T WANT TO JOIN THE CLUB.
AND NEITHER DO I.
OOOF!
GRRRRRR!

PAFT

PAFT

SORRY WE'RE LATE!

BUFFY--

HELP THE VICTIM.

I'LL STAKE *HER.*

HE'LL BE OKAY. I DON'T THINK HE INGESTED ANY BLOOD.

PARAMEDICS ARE ON THE WAY.

DON'T YOU KNOW IT'S SOMETIMES BEST TO JUST LET GO?

SEE WHAT I MEAN?

OOOW! WHAT THE HELL?!

KRAW

WE'VE GOT TO GO AFTER HER.

WHAT IF SHE SIRES SOMEONE ELSE?

?

SUN'S RISING. SHE'S CRAWLING BACK TO WHATEVER HOLE SHE CALLS A NEST.

JUST LIKE WE SHOULD BE DOING.

BUT WE CAN SLAY HER.

I APPRECIATE THE YOUTHFUL ENTHUSIASM, BUT YOUR GRANDMOTHER LETS YOU CRASH ON MY FLOOR ON ONE CONDITION--YOU SKYPE HER AFTER EVERY PATROL. WE'RE ALREADY LATE.

WE'LL DUST THE ZOMP TOMORROW NIGHT.

DID WE GET TO HIM IN TIME?

HE'S DEFINITELY *NOT* A VAMPIRE, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU MEAN. PARAMEDICS STABILIZED HIM, BUT HE LOST A LOT OF BLOOD.

THE TASK FORCE IS ON ITS WAY TO CLEAN UP THIS MESS.

YOU WANT THE PARAMEDICS TO TAKE A LOOK AT YOU?

WHY?

YOU'RE HOLDING YOUR ARM LIKE SOMEONE JUST TORE IT OFF.

TRUST ME, I'VE HELD MY ARM LIKE SOMEONE'S JUST TORN IT OFF, AND IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THIS.

I'M FINE.

BUT THAT ZOMPIRE *WAS* ALL KINDS OF STRONG.

EVEN FOR THE POST-SEED VARIETY.

THEY'RE SIRING BY INSTINCT. MAYBE THEY'RE EVOLVING.

I BETTER DO SOME RESEARCH.

I'LL TALK TO THE BOYS ON THE TASK FORCE AND SEE IF THEY'VE NOTICED ANY CHANGES IN THE ZOMPIRE POPULATION. MAYBE HER SUPERSTRENGTH ISN'T AN ISOLATED CASE.

DÉJÀ BUFFY. POSTFIGHT MORTEM, NEXT DAY PLAN-MAKING, ALL-A-BIT-YAWNY...

"...I THINK WE'RE OFFICIALLY A TEAM."

BLECH!

YOU OKAY? YOU'RE NOT... THAT THING WE DEFINITELY HAVEN'T BEEN PLANNING FOR?

NO.

AND YOU'RE NOT A ROBOT?

EVEN ANDREW COULDN'T PROGRAM ME TO FEEL THIS CRAPPY. OR RALPH THIS MUCH. I FEEL LIKE MY INSIDES ARE MELTING.

WHAT DO YOU THINK IT IS?

BUBONIC PLAGUE? A GOVERNMENT ENGINEERED VIRUS? AN ALIEN PARASITE? PROBABLY AN ALIEN PARASITE.

REALLY?

OR WE'VE JUST SPENT SO MUCH OF OUR LIVES SLAYING THAT WE FORGOT HOW NORMAL THINGS FEEL.

LIKE THE *FLU.*

YOU THINK? THEN I KIND OF LIKE IT.

REALLY?

'CAUSE IF YOU DON'T FLUSH, I'M ABOUT TO SWITCH MY EYE PATCH TO MY GOOD EYE.

I MEANT...I LIKE THIS. YOU TAKING CARE OF ME.

IT'S GOTTA BE SOMEWHERE.

HEY, SNOOPS-A-LOT--

--FIND ANYTHING GOOD?

YOU'RE BACK FROM PATROL EARLY.

I WAS LOOKING FOR...

...YOUR STRAPPY...ERR, UM, SILVER TOP! 'CAUSE I'M GOING OUT...LATER...AS IN TONIGHT, WHEN IT WOULD BE TOTALLY APPROPRIATE TO WEAR A STRAPPY OR SILVER TOP.

BOTH STRAPPY AND SILVER.

OH, AND I HAVE SOMETHING ELSE FOR YOU.

BAZINGA

RENT.

WHOA. THIS IS ENOUGH FOR SIX MONTHS.

THOUGHT I'D PAY AHEAD.

I DON'T GET IT. IF YOU HAVE THIS MUCH MONEY, YOU CAN AFFORD A MUCH NICER PLACE. WITH MUCH COOLER ROOMIES.

WOULD I HAVE MY OWN ROOM IN A MUCH NICER PLACE?

YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THE INTEREST ON MY STUDENT LOANS.

AND I LIKE LIVING WITH YOU AND TUMBLE.

IN THAT CASE, HOW DOES A CUP OF POSTPATROL EARL GREY AND LAST NIGHT'S *BACHELOR* SOUND?

I'M ALREADY ON MY WAY TO THE COUCH.

BILLY?

NO THANKS.

I'VE GOT TO HIT THE BOOK.

BUFFY?

XANDER TOLD ME YOU WERE UNDER THE WEATHER.

AND SO OVER IT.

I DON'T THINK I CAN FACE THE TOILET ONE MORE TIME.

NOTHING A STEADY DIET OF GINGER ALE, SALTINES, AND PEANUT BUTTER WON'T CURE.

THANKS, BUT I'M ALLERGIC TO PEANUT BUTTER. YOU KNOW THAT. EVEN WHEN I'M NOT SICK, THE THOUGHT OF IT MAKES ME WANT TO--

REALLY?

SLAM!

SINCE WHEN?

MAYBE I *HAVE* BEEN GONE FOR TOO LONG.

BLECH!

YOU REALLY KNOW HOW TO BRING OUT THE BEST IN YOUR SISTER.

BLECH!

AND YOU'RE STILL BRINGING IT OUT.

IS SHE OKAY?

DOCTOR SAYS THERE'S A PARTICULARLY NASTY STRAIN OF THE FLU GOING AROUND.

AND WHILE WE'RE ON THE SUBJECT OF NASTY.

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

NO BIGGIE. GOT NICKED WITH A MYSTICAL BLADE, AND IT SEEMS TO BE TAXING MY SLAYER HEALING FACTOR.

SO YOU'RE BACK FOR GOOD?

NO TRIPS INTO SPACE...SIDEBAR--JEALOUS--NO MORE BEING A ROBOT...SIDEBAR--STILL JEALOUS--NO MORE WORKING FOR KENNEDY... FINAL SIDEBAR--NOT SO JEALOUS.

YEAH. I'M BACK.

MY LITTLE ADVENTURE WITH KENNEDY LEFT ME INDEPENDENTLY... WELL, NOT-NEEDING-A-JOB-RIGHT-NOW. SO I'M BACK TO SLAYING FULL-TIME. ME, A SHARP POINTY OBJECT, AND NO END OF VAMPIRES TO DUST WITH IT.

SPEAKING OF FULL TIME. I'VE GOT TO RUN.

DOWLING FOUND A NEST.

BZZZZZ

NEST? VAMPIRE OR LOVE?

VAMPIRE. DOWLING AND I ARE NOT--

GIVE HER A BREAK, XANDER.

THANK YOU.

BUFFY'S CLEARLY NOT INTERESTED IN A GUY LIKE DOWLING.

WAIT.
WHY WOULDN'T I BE INTERESTED IN A GUY LIKE DOWLING?

HE'S NOT YOUR TYPE.
ALIVE. UNDER A CENTURY. GAINFULLY EMPLOYED. AND YOU'RE ACTUALLY RETURNING HIS TEXTS.

PLEASE. WE SLAY TOGETHER. HE'S PRACTICALLY A SCOOBY.
WHEN HAS A LITTLE INTERORGANIZATIONAL ROMANCE STOPPED YOU BEFORE?
JUST MAKE SURE YOU REPORT IT TO H.R.

IT'S OKAY, BUFFY. WE LIKE HIM.

WHY?
BECAUSE YOU'RE HAPPY.

YOU REALLY THINK SO?

YOU'RE LATE. WE'VE GOT TO GET INTO THE NEST BEFORE IT'S DARK ENOUGH FOR THE ZOMPIRES TO LEAVE.

I WAS BUSY KILLING RUMORS.

NOT VAMPIRES? WERE THE RUMORS AT LEAST EVIL?

DEPENDS ON HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT XANDER AND DAWN THINKING WE'RE DATING.

TERRIBLE. HORRIBLE. THAT RUMOR DESERVED TO DIE A SLOW, PAINFUL DEATH.

WE DO SPEND EVERY NIGHT TOGETHER.

BUT THE GIRLS I DATE...I USUALLY END UP HAVING BREAKFAST WITH THEM IN THE MORNING.

OH. GOOD. SO WE'RE CLEAR. WE'RE NOT DATING.

HEY BUFFY...

...YOU WANNA GRAB BREAKFAST IN THE MORNING?

I WON'T TELL XANDER AND DAWN IF YOU WON'T.

M.T.A. CALLED IN A COMPLAINT TO THE TASK FORCE ABOUT ZOMPS SETTING UP IN THE DEPOT. GIVEN THE PROXIMITY TO LAST NIGHT'S ATTACKS, THAT ZOMPIRE WE'RE AFTER HAS GOT TO BE HOLED UP HERE.

YOU SLAYERS MUST HAVE SUPER-STRENGTH JUST SO YOU CAN HAUL ALL YOUR GEAR AROUND.

WHAT'S IN THE BAG?

ROPE SOAKED IN HOLY WATER. I READ ABOUT IT IN THE BIG BOOK O' VAMPYR.

IF WE CATCH THE STRONG ONE, MAYBE WE CAN FIGURE OUT WHAT'S GIVING HER THAT EXTRA PEP IN HER STEP.

IT'S TOO DANGEROUS. WE'VE GOT TO DUST HER.

I WENT INTO A *CHURCH* TO GET HOLY WATER. I CAN HANDLE AN UBERZOMP.

THE KID'S RIGHT. IF THERE'S A NEW KIND OF ZOMPIRE IN TOWN, WE NEED TO KNOW EVERYTHING WE CAN ABOUT IT.

BUT THE DETECTIVE IS RIGHT, TOO. IT'S DANGEROUS.

YOU CLEAR THE DECK. I'LL WRANGLE LITTLE MISS STAY-OUT-OF-THE-SUNSHINE.

BAZLIK

WHO'S HUNGRY?

OVER THERE!

GRRRRRRR!

GRRRRRRR!

PAFT PAFT

YOU'RE WITH ME.

WHACK

CAN'T HANDLE A LITTLE ROPE BURN?

SIZZZZZZZZZ

SIZZZZZZZZZ

GRRRRRRR!

HUH...

50

WHY'D YOU LET HER GO?!

I THINK I *KNOW* HER.

WHAT? FROM WHERE?

PAFT

NOT SURE.

BUT DEFINITELY *BEFORE* SHE WAS A--

ZOM--

--PIRE!

DOWLING?

BUFFY?!

WATCH OUT!

GRRRRRRR!

AAAAAA

OOOF--

WHAT THE HELL DIMENSION?

I'M IN L.A.

IN MY DAY, WE CALLED IT VAHLA HA'NESH.

YOU TELEPORTED ME HERE? I WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF MAKING A PRETTY BIG SLAYING BREAK-THROUGH.

YOUR MATTERS ARE TRIVIAL COMPARED TO WHAT THE COUNCIL WANTS.

COUNCIL? THE WATCHERS' COUNCIL IS DEFUNCT.

THIS IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOUR PATHETIC WATCHERS' COUNCIL, AND THAT'S WHY YOU'RE GOING TO JOIN US.

I DON'T JOIN ANYTHING WITHOUT READING THE SMALL PRINT. AND DIDN'T ANYONE TELL YOU YOU'RE CHEATING? TELEPORTING REQUIRES MAGIC, WHICH YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO HAVE.

WE KNOW.

YOU'VE IRREVOCABLY CHANGED THIS WORLD. AND BECAUSE OF YOU, THINGS ARE FAR WORSE THAN WE EVER THOUGHT POSSIBLE.

BUT LIKE YOU...

...I STILL HAVE POWER IN ME.

...CAN'T MOVE...

SO YOU CAN EITHER JOIN US OR PERISH.

IS THERE A THIRD OPTION?

BUFFY DISAPPEARED INTO THIN AIR. AND BECAUSE I WANTED TO TAKE THE UBERZOMP ALIVE--

DOWLING--

WELCOME TO THE TEAM

PART TWO

--DOWLING'S GOING TO DIE.

...UHHHH...

UNLESS I DIG DOWN DEEP...

PAFT

...AND PROVE I'VE GOT A SLAYER IN ME.

PROBLEM IS I PROBABLY NEED ABOUT TEN SLAYERS TO GET OUT OF THIS.

GRRAARRRR!

DOWLING!

PAFT

PAFT
PAFT
V.T.F.
OFFICER DOWN!
WE NEED A MEDIC!
PAFT
PAFT
WE'RE CLEAR!
DOWLING-- YOU CAME INTO A NEST WITH JUST THIS KID?
I'M NOT JUST A KID. I'M ALSO A SLAYER-IN-TRAINING. AND BUFFY WAS WITH US--
THE SLAYER? WHERE IS SHE?
...FIND HER...

"...FIND BUFFY..."

BLUE HAIR, BAD CATSUIT, AND THE ABILITY TO REALLY DRAG SOMETHING OUT. YOU MUST BE--

ILLYRIA. YOU KNOW OF MY POWER.

ANGEL AND SPIKE GAVE ME THE *CLIFFS NOTES.*

BUT I THOUGHT THEY PULLED THE PLUG ON YOUR TIME-WARPING MAGIC ACT.

YOU THINK MY STORY ENDED WHEN I PARTED WAYS WITH YOUR HALF-BREED FRIENDS? I AM SMALL AND INSIGNIFICANT WITHOUT POWER. SUFFICE IT TO SAY, I FOUND IT AGAIN.

BEFORE YOU CUT THIS REALM OFF FROM ITS HEART.

SO WHY AM I HERE?

I GROW WEARY OF EXPLANATION.

WAIT!

THEY WILL TELL YOU WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW.

WELCOME, SLAYER.

D'HOFFRYN?

LET ME GUESS. YOU EITHER WANT TO TURN ME INTO A VENGEANCE DEMON OR YOU'RE GOING TO BARBECUE ME FROM THE INSIDE OUT.

WE HAVE A COLORFUL PAST, DON'T WE? BUT THIS MEETING HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH *YOU AND ME,* SLAYER.

YOU ARE HERE BY A VOTE OF THE COUNCIL.

SORRY, I DON'T REMEMBER SIGNING UP FOR *SURVIVOR-- FREAK ISLAND.*

WITHOUT A CONDUIT TO THE HELL DIMENSIONS, BEINGS WHO HAVE POWER IN THIS REALM ARE FEW. WE *ALL* MUST BAND TOGETHER TO PROTECT WHAT LITTLE MYSTICAL ENERGY IS LEFT.

WITCHES, DEMONS, MYSTICS, DEITIES--

--AND NOW A SLAYER?

I'VE HEARD IT ALL BEFORE--HOW IT'S MY FAULT THAT NINETY-NINE POINT NINE NINE PERCENT OF THE WORLD IS MAGICALLY IMPAIRED--BUT THAT'S NOT GOING TO GUILT ME INTO JOINING YOUR AFTER-SCHOOL CLUB.

THIS IS NOT ABOUT BLAME, BUFFY SUMMERS.

THIS IS ABOUT GIVING YOU A CHANCE TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE THAT HAS BEEN DONE TO THIS REALM.

I'M DOING THAT. I'VE GOT MY OWN BATTLES TO FIGHT. AND RIGHT NOW, THEY'RE IN SAN FRANCISCO. DUSTING ZOMPIRES ALONGSIDE MY FRIENDS.

THAT MELEE IS OVER. YOUR FRIENDS NO LONGER REQUIRE YOUR HELP.

AND, BUFFY, YOU ARE MISTAKEN ABOUT THE COUNCIL'S PURPOSE.

WE ARE FIGHTING *YOUR* BATTLE.

ONE THAT NOW THREATENS US ALL.

SEVERIN?

ONE *YOU* LEFT UNFINISHED!

cough cough

cough cough

cough cough

WHY ISN'T THE NIGHTTIME SNIFFLING, SNEEZING, COUGHING, ACHING, STUFFY-HEAD, FEVER, SO-XANDER-CAN-REST MEDICINE *WORKING?!*

BECAUSE YOU SMASHED IT AGAINST THE WALL.

RIGHT. SORRY. I'LL HIT THE COUCH.

BUT NOT WITH MY FISTS.

Bring!

WHAT?!

--LOST TWO LITERS--

--GOING INTO SHOCK--

--MULTIPLE PUNCTURE WOUNDS--

--BLOOD PRESSURE DROPPING--

PREP THE TRANSFUSION!

WE'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE.

WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED?

WHERE'S BUFFY?

WE WERE TRYING TO CAPTURE THIS SUPER-ZOMP, THEN BUFFY DISAPPEARED. I DIDN'T SEE IT HAPPEN, BUT DETECTIVE DOWLING DID, AND THEN THE SUPERZOMP JUMPED ON HIM AND--

WHAT DO YOU MEAN-- *DISAPPEARED?*

SHE JUST *VANISHED!* BUT I *PROMISE* I'LL FIND HER!

XANDER!

DOWLING SAW WHAT HAPPENED TO BUFFY. SOMEONE NEEDS TO BE HERE WHEN HE WAKES UP--

DAZZLING

IF HE WAKES UP.

I'LL STAY. GO HOME AND SLEEP.

EXIT

I DON'T THINK YOU SHOULD BE ALONE.

WHY WOULD THAT BE, DAWNIE?

IT'S BARELY FOUR A.M. AND YOU'VE ALREADY PICKED A FIGHT WITH A BOTTLE OF NYQUIL AND A SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD KID.

I JUST THINK YOU MIGHT NEED A LITTLE PERSPECTIVE ON APPROPRIATE RESPONSES TO STRESSFUL SITUATIONS BEFORE YOU DO ANYTHING ELSE.

THE COLD MEDICINE WAS ASKING FOR IT.

YOU KNOW I HAVE A HARD TIME WITH THE WHOLE *PERSPECTIVE* THING.

OKAY, NOT A GOOD TIME FOR JOKES.

MAYBE I HAVE BEEN HULKING OUT LATELY. BUT WHEN YOU'RE USED TO LIVING LIFE AT A HUNDRED MILES AN HOUR, IT'S HARD TO SLOW DOWN. SOMETIMES I ACT LIKE WE'RE STILL HOLDING ON FOR DEAR LIFE.

SOMETIMES?

OKAY, MOST TIMES.

IS IT BECAUSE YOU MISS THE WAY THINGS USED TO BE?

WHAT? THE FIGHTING FOR OUR LIVES, THE FIGHTING FOR OUR LIVES, OR THE FIGHTING FOR OUR LIVES?

DAWN, I DON'T WANT TO GO BACK TO *THAT.*

IF WE HADN'T WALKED AWAY, WE MIGHT BE THE ONES GETTING A RIDE ON THAT ELEVATOR TONIGHT.

DO YOU FEEL GUILTY THAT IT WASN'T US?

DAWN, IT *WAS* US FOR A REALLY LONG TIME.

WE'VE EARNED A BREATHER.

BUT JUST BECAUSE WE'RE ON THE SIDELINES DOESN'T MEAN WE CAN'T WAKE UP EVERY PERSON WHO MIGHT KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO BUFFY.

THE SIPHON PICKED ME UP AT ONE OF THOSE DEMON BARS IN SILVER LAKE.

"I THOUGHT HE WANTED TO GO BACK TO HIS PLACE TO GET SCORCHED, LIKE EVERY OTHER GUY WHO PICKS ME UP.

"BUT I DIDN'T KNOW WHO HE REALLY WAS...

"...UNTIL HE GRABBED MY HEAD. A SURGE OF POWER SHOT THROUGH MY BODY. I BLACKED OUT AND...

"...WHEN I FINALLY WOKE UP, I LOOKED LIKE..."

...THIS.

I UNDERSTAND YOUR PAIN. I SPENT MORE TIME THAN I CARED TO TRAPPED IN THIS BODY WITH DIMINISHED POWERS. EVERY DAY, I FELT MORE AND MORE...

...HUMAN.

I HEARD THAT WAS AN IMPROVEMENT.

MORE HALF-TRUTHS FROM THE HALF-BREEDS? I WAS NOT LIKE THEIR BELOVED FRED. IT WAS AN AFFECTATION TO PLEASE THEM.

IT DIDN'T WORK.

FOR ANY OF US.

THIS DEMON IS ONE OF MANY VICTIMS OF THE SIPHON.

HIS POWER GROWS UNCHECKED.

IT THREATENS THE NATURAL ORDER OF THINGS.

HE WILL COME AFTER ALL OF US.

I THINK SEVERIN MAY BE WORKING WITH A ROGUE SLAYER.

I DEALT WITH HER, BUT ALL HER TALK ABOUT MY "ENERGY" WAS A LITTLE TOO ACADEMIC FOR SOMEONE WHOSE ANSWER TO ANY QUESTION INVOLVES POINTING A GUN AT IT.

WILL YOU FINISH WHAT YOU BEGAN? WILL YOU HELP US DEFEAT THE SIPHON ONCE AND FOR ALL?

USUALLY I'M THE ONE SNUFFING OUT MATCHSTICK DEMONS.

NO OFFENSE.

NONE TAKEN.

BUT SEVERIN'S CHARGING UP FOR A REASON.

WE NEED TO FIND OUT WHY.

I'M IN.

"I DON'T THINK I BELONG ON THE TEAM ANYMORE."

KNOCK IT OFF, BILLY.

BUFFY ASKED YOU TO BE A PART OF HER SQUAD BECAUSE SHE THINKS YOU CAN HANDLE IT.

BEFORE SHE DISAPPEARED. *BEFORE* I LET DOWLING GET MAULED BY A SUPERZOMP.

HOW MANY ZOMPIRES DID YOU TAKE OUT TRYING TO SAVE HIM?

I DON'T KNOW, DEVON. THREE OR FOUR.

THAT'S THREE OR FOUR WHO WON'T BE FEASTING ON THE FINE PEOPLE OF SAN FRANCISCO TONIGHT.

BUT I PROMISED DOWLING I'D FIND BUFFY. I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START. AND THERE WAS THIS UBERZOMPIRE, AND I HAVE NO IDEA HOW IT FITS INTO THE PUZZLE--

C'MON, BILLY, WHAT WOULD THE HARDY BOYS DO WHEN THEY GOT STUCK ON A CASE?

SERIOUSLY? I'M FREAKING OUT ABOUT VAMPIRES AND YOU'RE QUIZZING ME ABOUT Y.A. FICTION I READ WHEN I WAS IN THE FOURTH GRADE?!

FRANK AND JOE WOULD GO BACK TO THE SCENE OF THE CRIME AND SCOUR IT FOR CLUES.

MAYBE I'LL FIND SOMETHING DURING THE DAY THAT I MISSED AT NIGHT!

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

TO FIND BUFFY!

HONEY BEAR

WHAT HAPPENED TO BUFFY?!

SLAM!

SO HOW DOES THIS WORK? ARE YOU GOING TO ZAP SEVERIN HERE WHILE HE'S BRUSHING HIS TEETH SO WE CAN CATCH HIM OFF GUARD?

THE SIPHON'S GAINED SO MUCH POWER THAT HE SEEMS IMPERVIOUS TO MY ATTEMPTS TO BEND SPACE AND TIME AROUND HIM.

THEN WE'LL TAKE THE SLAYING TO HIM.

WHICH MEANS WE'LL BE FIGHTING HIM ON HIS TURF.

YOU WILL HAVE REINFORCEMENTS. I WILL ACCOMPANY YOU.

AND THE COUNCIL HAS RECRUITED SOMEONE ELSE.

SOMEONE WHO HELPED YOU DEFEAT THE SIPHON LAST TIME.

SPIKE?

JUST SO YOU KNOW, THINGS MIGHT BE A LITTLE...

GREETINGS, SLAYER.

...AWKWARD BETWEEN US.

ARE YOU SURE IT CAN'T BE SPIKE? I'D MUCH RATHER GO BACK TO WHEN I THOUGHT IT WAS SPIKE.

I ASKED THE SAME QUESTION.

I HAVE NO TIME FOR YOUR PETTY DIFFERENCES.

COME TO A TRUCE OR YOU BOTH WILL PERISH AT THE HANDS OF THE SIPHON.

THE NITOBE CODE ALLOWS YOU TO TAKE ORDERS FROM SOMEONE LIKE ILLYRIA?

UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, NO. BUT ILLYRIA HAS PROMISED ME THE ONE THING YOU DENIED ME.

JUSTICE.

YOU TRUST SMURFETTE TO FIND OUT WHO IMPRISONED YOU?

IN MY DAY, ILLYRIA WAS A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH. SHE WILL MAKE GOOD ON HER PROMISE.

I ACCEPT THIS TRUCE.

MR. HARRIS?

YOU'RE DETECTIVE DOWLING'S FRIENDS?

IS HE...

HE MADE IT THROUGH THE SURGERY. WE STOPPED THE BLEEDING. IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S GOING TO BE OKAY.

WHEN CAN WE TALK TO HIM?

I KNOW *HE'S* THE COP, BUT WE HAVE SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK HIM.

XANDER, I DON'T...

...FEEL SO GOOD.

WAITING ROOM 2

HE'S HEAVILY SEDATED. IT'S GOING TO BE A FEW DAYS BEFORE HE WAKES UP.

XANDER...

...CAN YOU HEAR ME?

AM I JUST SAYING THIS IN MY HEAD?

DAWN, DID YOU HEAR WHAT THE DOC SAID--

WAITING ROOM

XANDER! MAKE IT STOP...

...I THINK IT'S MORE THAN A COLD.

WAITING ROOM 2

DAWN--

I FEEL LIKE I'M STARTING TO...

...

DAWN! DAWN!

SHE'S NOT BREATHING!

IN POSITION.

AS AM I.

ME TOO.

SEAL TEAM SIX SIX SIX IS A GO.

SWISH

SWISH

CRASH

WHERE'S THE SIPHON?

THE MATCHSTICK DEMON'S STORY PUT HIM HERE.

THEN WE'VE BEEN TRICKED.

CLINK

IT'S A TRAP.

DID YOU SELL US OUT, KOH?

YOU QUESTION MY LOYALTY.

WHY WOULD I DO THAT?!

DON'T BLAME HIM.

I FOUND OUT YOU WERE COMING FROM SOMEBODY ELSE.

WELCOME TO THE TEAM

PART THREE

DROP THE DEMON, SEV.

YOU ARE NOT WORTHY OF THE POWER YOU HAVE STOLEN.

REALLY? DID "THE COUNCIL" TAKE A VOTE ON THAT?

I'LL LET THE SWORD ANSWER.

CRACKLE

I EXPECTED MORE FROM AN OLD ONE.

OH, WELL. TIME TO MAKE WAY FOR SOMETHING NEW.

BEEP
BEEP
BEEP

TOX SCREEN AND BLOOD PANEL CAME BACK NEGATIVE.
NO SIGN OF BACTERIAL OR VIRAL INFECTION.

WHAT ABOUT AN ANEURYSM? COULD SOMETHING HAVE HAPPENED INSIDE HER HEAD?
'CAUSE DAWN'S MOM--

MR. HARRIS, IT WASN'T AN ANEURYSM. THERE'D BE SIGNS OF HEMORRHAGING IF IT WERE.

I WISH I HAD BETTER NEWS. BUT, FOR SOME REASON WE CAN'T EXPLAIN RIGHT NOW, DAWN'S BODY IS SHUTTING DOWN.

YOU WENT TO MEDICAL SCHOOL JUST SO YOU COULD DIAGNOSE HER WITH "SOME REASON WE CAN'T EXPLAIN"?!
HOW DO WE TREAT THAT? WITH A PILL? A SHOT? AN OPERATION YOU CAN'T EXPLAIN?
I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU'RE FRUSTRATED. BUT YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY WE WON'T REST UNTIL WE FIGURE OUT WHAT'S WRONG.

LAST NIGHT, YOU ASKED ME IF I EVER FELT GUILTY ABOUT WALKING AWAY FROM BUFFY.

THE ANSWER WAS NO...

...BECAUSE I ALWAYS TOLD MYSELF THAT WALKING AWAY MEANT *YOU'D* BE OKAY.

SO WHY AREN'T YOU OKAY?

YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE OKAY.

I NEED TO MAKE YOU OKAY.

MEET ME AT THE HOSPITAL. IT'S DAWN.

FINALLY.

ILLYRIA...

ILLYRIA--

YOU WILL NOT TAKE MY POWER.

?

SLAYER!

WHY CAN'T YOU KEEP YOUR POINTY LITTLE STAKE OUT OF THIS?!

HER POWER IS MINE!

WHACK

SORRY, SEV, BUT BLUE'S JUST NOT YOUR COLOR.

I'LL SUCK YOU BOTH DRY.

LIKE I SHOULD HAVE LAST TIME.

CORRECTION--LAST TIME, YOU ALMOST SUCKED A BUFFY-BOT DRY.

THIS TIME I'M *ALL* SLAYER.

DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THAT'S GOING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

NOW, WHERE'S ILLYRIA?

TELL ME WHERE SHE HOUDINIED HERSELF TO, AND I CAN UNDO ALL OF THIS!

UNDO *KKK* WHAT?

YOU THINK THIS IS ABOUT POWER?! YOU THINK I'M CHARGING UP BECAUSE I WANT TO PUT ON A *LIGHT* SHOW?!

I JUST WANT TO *SAVE* HER!

HER...

...THIS IS ABOUT THE GIRL YOU KILLED.

HER NAME WAS--

AAAHH

A WARRIOR NEVER LETS HIS GUARD DOWN.

WE BETTER BOOGIE. HE'S ABOUT TO GO--

--CHERNOBYL ON US.

YOU REALLY HAVE TO WORK ON THAT LANDING.

BOOM BOOM

YOU OKAY?

THE SIPHON BARELY TASTED MY POWER.

I'VE ONLY SLOWED HIM DOWN.

WE HAVE TO GET BACK TO THE COUNCIL.

I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT SEVERIN'S UP TO.

BING

THE MYSTERY OF THE DISAPPEARING SLAYER, VOLUME ONE.

THE POLICE HAVE FINISHED THEIR INVESTIGATION, LEAVING THE REAL DETECTIVE WORK TO ME.

LEAVING LITTLE EVIDENCE BEHIND, BUFFY VANISHED INTO THIN AIR.

AND BESIDES DETECTIVE DOWLING, WHO IS STILL UNCONSCIOUS, THERE ARE NO WITNESSES WHO DIDN'T GO UP IN A CLOUD OF DUST--

UNLESS.

FIND SOMETHING?

ANAHEED? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

HELPING YOU FIGURE OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO BUFFY.

THE YELLOW TAPE IS THERE FOR A REASON. THIS IS NO PLACE--

--FOR SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T HAVE ANY SLAYER POWERS?

I SAW WHAT HAPPENED TO DOWLING ON THE MORNING NEWS. YOU'RE LUCKY YOU GOT OUT OF THIS NEST ALIVE. YOU SHOULDN'T BE BACK HERE.

I NEED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT HAPPENED.

YOU SHOULD GO HOME.

I CAN HELP.

THANKS, BUT NO THANKS.

I SAW YOU GOING THROUGH BUFFY'S ROOM. YOU WERE LOOKING FOR SLAYER GEAR, RIGHT?

BILLY, THAT WASN'T WHAT YOU THINK.

LOOK, I KNOW YOU WANT TO JUMP ON THE SLAYER WAGON LIKE I DID, BUT SAVE YOURSELF THE TROUBLE AND DON'T GET ON IT.

BECAUSE NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU TRY, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO LIVE UP TO WHAT A SLAYER SHOULD BE. YOUR MENTOR WILL VANISH INTO THIN AIR. AND YOU'LL NEARLY GET YOUR VAMPIRE-FIGHTING COP FRIEND KILLED.

YOU KNOW WHY?

'CAUSE YOU'RE *NOT* A SLAYER.

AND NEITHER AM I.

I DON'T NEED ANYBODY ELSE'S MISTAKES TO FIX.

YEAH, I GET IT.

I'LL LEAVE YOU TO YOUR DETECTIVE WORK.

ME?

YES, SEVERIN'S TARGETING *YOU.*

HE USED THE COUNCIL TO DRAW YOU OUT.

IF HE JUST WANTED A MAGICAL SNACK, HE COULD HAVE DINED ON ME OR KOH WITHOUT WORRYING ABOUT YOUR ABILITIES.

BUT SEVERIN WENT STRAIGHT FOR THE MAIN COURSE--*YOU.*

BECAUSE I AM MORE POWERFUL THAN BOTH OF YOU COMBINED.

THAT'S NOT IT.

SEVERIN THINKS HE'LL BE ABLE TO TRAVEL BACK IN TIME IF HE STEALS *ILLYRIA'S* ABILITIES.

CAN HE DO THAT? STEAL MORE THAN JUST HER MYSTICAL ENERGY?

WHO KNOWS. BUT HE THINKS HE CAN.

LAST YEAR SEVERIN AND HIS GIRLFRIEND HAD THEIR SIGHTS SET ON THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF VAMPDOM. HIS GIRLFRIEND TOOK THE PLUNGE FIRST AND WOKE UP A ZOMPIRE. BRAINLESS. MASSIVE OVERBITE.

SEVERIN DIDN'T KNOW HE WAS THE SIPHON. HE KILLED HER, BUT HE BLAMES *ME* FOR HER DEATH.

HE JUST WANTS TO SAVE HIS GIRLFRIEND.

IF THE SIPHON STEALS YOUR POWER, COULD HE REVERSE TIME AND STOP HER FROM TURNING?

EVEN MY ABILITY TO CONTROL SPACE AND TIME HAS LIMITS.

TRAVELING THROUGH TIME TO UNDO PAST EVENTS REQUIRES VAST SUMS OF ENERGY.

WHICH SEVERIN'S BEEN COLLECTING LIKE BASEBALL CARDS.

IF HE UNDID THE PAST, IT WOULD DAMAGE THIS REALM MORE THAN IT'S ALREADY BEEN DAMAGED.

THE SIPHON'S MORE DANGEROUS THAN WE THOUGHT.

HE MUST BE STOPPED.

IF THE SIPHON ACTS TO SAVE SOMEONE HE LOVES, HE CANNOT BE REASONED WITH.

"LOVE"? THAT'S WHEN YOU DECIDE TO CHIME IN?

I AM SIMPLY PROVIDING INSIGHT INTO OUR ENEMY.

SORRY. WASN'T EXPECTING A GOOEY CENTER BEHIND THE OUTER DEMON SHELL.

THE NITOBE ARE MORE COMPLICATED THAN YOU GIVE US CREDIT FOR.

KOH-MEO HERE IS RIGHT. SEVERIN'S DESPERATE. HE WILL COME AFTER ILLYRIA AGAIN.

WE NEED TO BE READY.

BOOM BOOM BOOM

I WAS HOPING WE'D HAVE MORE TIME THAN THAT.

HE IS HERE! HE FOUND US!

HE MUST HAVE FOLLOWED YOU.

HE WILL RIP POWER FROM THOSE OF US WHO STILL HAVE IT.

NO, THE SIPHON WANTS ME...

...AND THAT'S WHAT WE WILL GIVE HIM.

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO HER?

THE QU'SHAL SPEAR, THE DISCS OF NALEM, AND THE DARENTO CRYSTALS ALL TELL ME ONE THING.

I CAN'T DIAGNOSE HER. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M DOING HERE.

WHERE'S BUFFY?

SHE'S M.I.A.. AND "I DON'T KNOW" IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH, WELLS. THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT DOCTOR DO-VERY-LITTLE SAID.

I CALLED YOU BECAUSE YOU USED TO BE A MASTER OF THE DEMONIC ARTS--

SOMETHING MYSTICAL IS GOING ON, BUT IF I DON'T HAVE MAGIC--OR MAYBE HUGH LAURIE--AT MY DISPOSAL, NOT EVEN THE STRONGEST TALISMAN CAN HELP ME FIGURE OUT EXACTLY WHAT'S HAPPENING TO DAWN.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

GETTING HER OUT OF HERE.

HER BODY IS FAILING. WE NEED TO GET HER INTO A NEW ONE, STAT.

"RIGHT AWAY." IT'S LATIN...

WHAT DOES *THAT* MEAN?

OH...

BUFFY DIDN'T TELL YOU ABOUT OUR BUFFYBOT ADVENTURE HOUR?

NO!

I MEAN YES, BUT YOU'RE *NOT* PUTTING DAWN'S BRAIN IN A BUFFYBOT.

RIGHT NOW, IT'S THE *ONLY* WAY I CAN THINK OF SAVING HER!

OKAY, FINE! BUT TELL ME--HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET DAWN OUT OF HERE?

WE'RE GOING TO GIVE HER A *STAR TREK IV-- THE VOYAGE HOME!*

ARE YOU KIRK OR MCCOY?

WELL, I THINK ONLY ONE OF US HAS EVER COMMANDED AN INTERGALACTIC STARSHIP BEFORE...

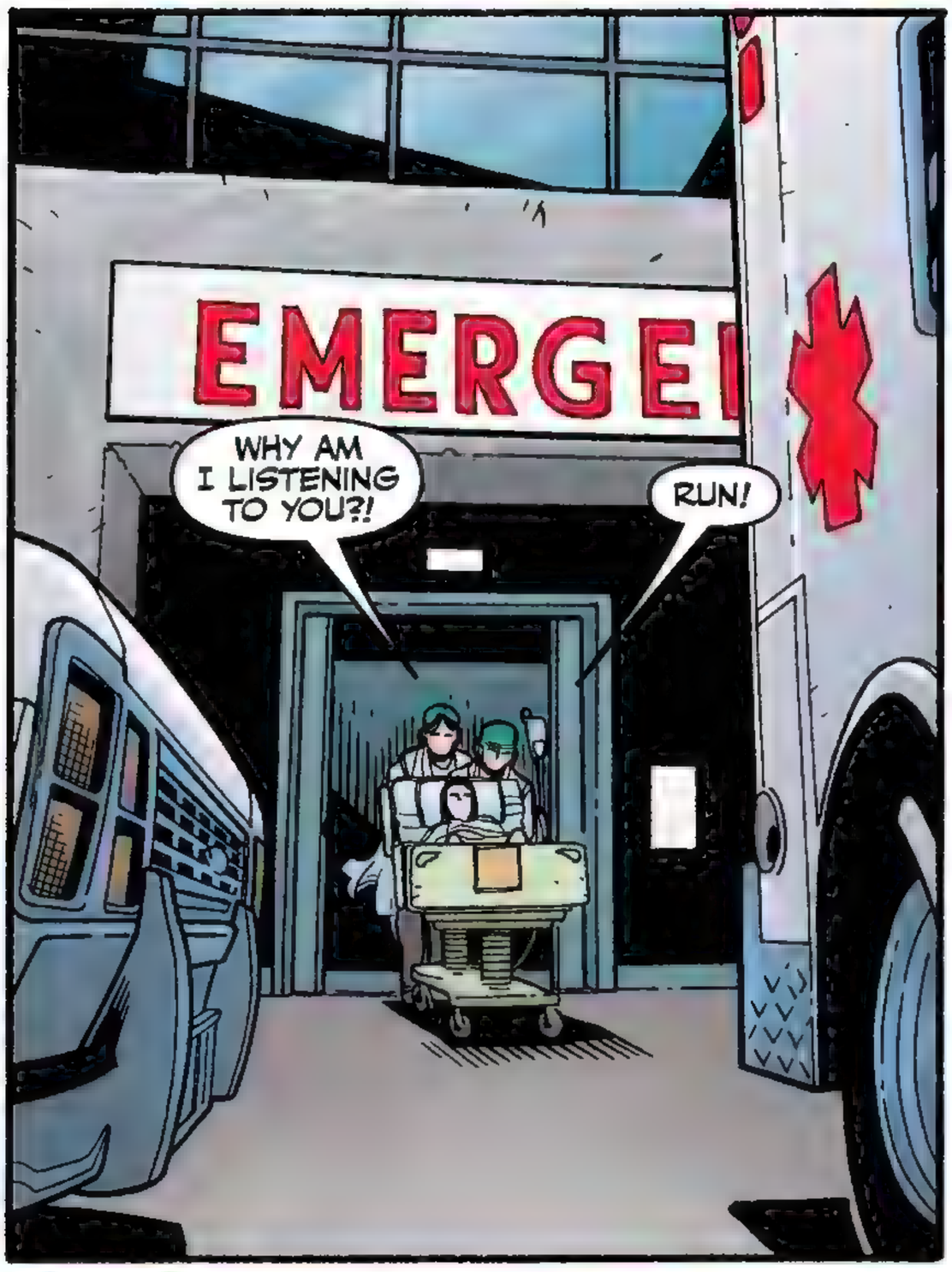
...EVEN IF IT WAS CREWED BY GIANT INSECTS.

EXCUSE ME! THAT PATIENT WASN'T CLEARED FOR TRANSFER!

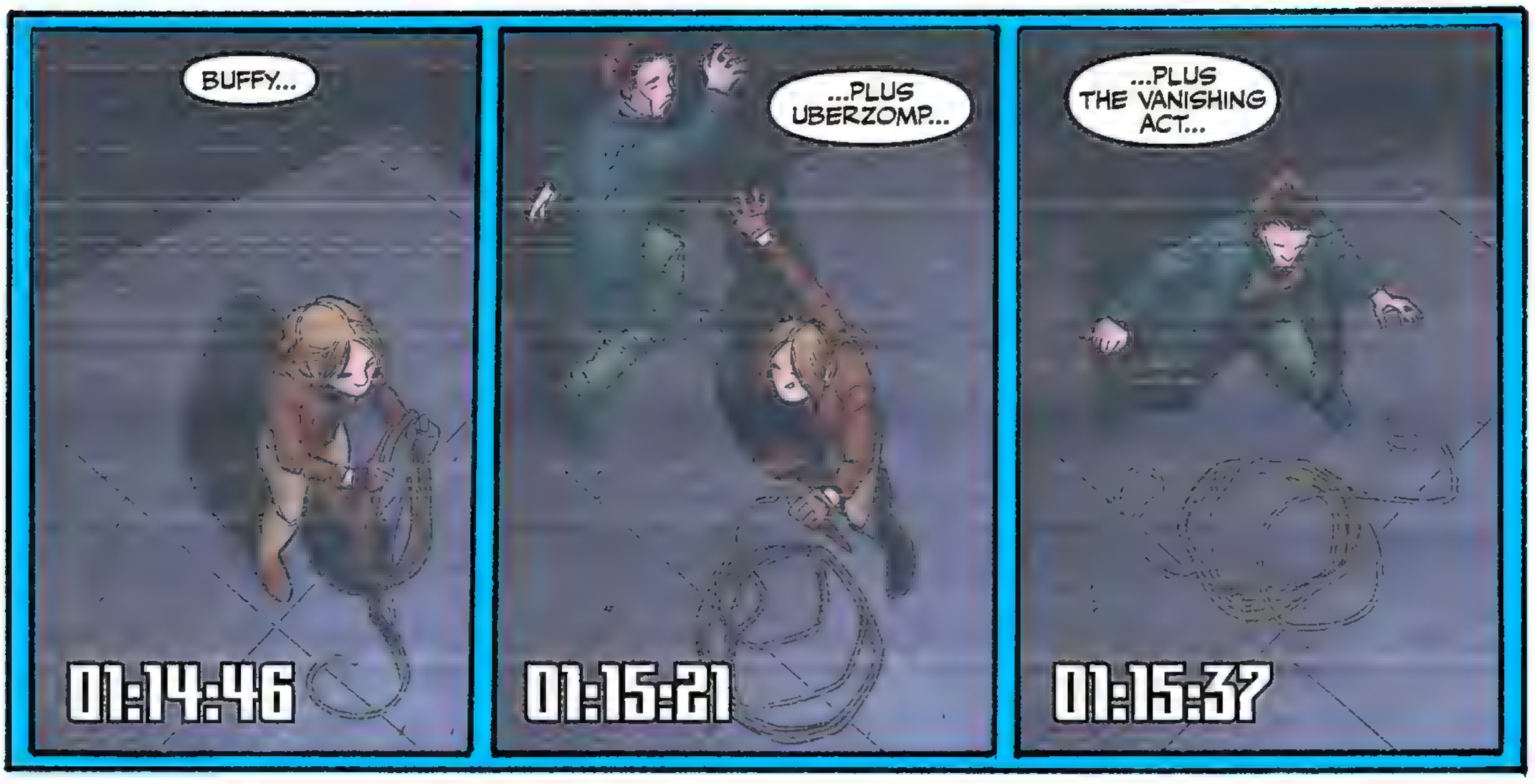
STAY AWAY--

SHE'S GOT A CASE OF TARELLIAN PLAGUE!

WHAT NOW?
I'M NOT SURE. THIS IS THE PART WHERE KIRK, SPOCK, AND CHEKOV GOT TRANSPORTED TO THE BIRD OF PREY.


EMERGE
WHY AM I LISTENING TO YOU?!
RUN!

AND, XANDER, I KNOW I DON'T HAVE THE BEST TRACK RECORD WHEN IT COMES TO HEROICS.
BUT I PROMISE I WON'T MESS THIS UP.


BUFFY...
01:14:46
...PLUS UBERZOMP...
01:15:21
...PLUS THE VANISHING ACT...
01:15:37

...EQUALS...

ONE BIG FAT "I DON'T KNOW."

THEY'RE BACK!

GRRRR

BAM BAM

YOU *HAD* TO BE A SLAYER...

PAFT

AHH--!

PAFT

PAFT

YOU WERE WRONG.

I AM A SLAYER.

WHAT? HOW?

LET'S SAVE THE EXPOS FOR *AFTER* WE DUST THESE GUYS.

PAFT

PAFT

WE CANNOT HOLD THE SIPHON OFF FOREVER.

I AM READY.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS. YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE SIPHON BAIT.

I MUST FACE HIM AT SOME POINT.

AND I CAN DISTRACT HIM LONG ENOUGH FOR YOU AND ELDRE KOH TO DO WHAT WE BROUGHT YOU HERE TO DO.

SLAY HIM.

HIS GUARD WILL BE DOWN WHEN HE TRIES TO STEAL YOUR ENERGY. THAT IS WHEN WE MUST STRIKE.

LISTEN. I WILL TELEPORT YOU TO MY SIDE WHEN HE PLACES HIS HANDS ON ME.

DON'T WORRY. WE'LL SLAY HIM ***BEFORE*** HE SUCKS AN OUNCE OF YOUR MOJO.

I DO NOT FEAR LOSING MY POWER.

I HAVE FACED THAT BEFORE. WHAT IT'S LIKE TO FEEL SMALL AND INSIGNIFICANT. TO EXPERIENCE PAIN AND LOSS.

TO BE HUMAN.

I CAN HANDLE IT. BUT THE SIPHON...

KRRA

...HE CANNOT HANDLE THE POWER INSIDE ME.

IF YOU WANT MY POWER, COME AND TAKE IT.

SINCE YOU'RE OFFERING...

YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT MY POWER WILL DO TO YOU.

YEAH, I DO. THAT'S THE POINT.

YOU NEVER SHOULD HAVE COME OUT HERE ALONE.

I'M NOT--

--NOW--

--ALONE...

SWISH

WE'RE IN THE WRONG PLACE.

HOW?

NICE TRY.

BUT YOUR FRIENDS AREN'T COMING.

AHHHHHH-

--ILLYRIA--

--ILLYRIA--

WELCOME TO THE TEAM

PART FOUR

--CAN YOU HEAR ME--

--SHE'S WAKING UP--

--ILLYRIA?

...WHAT HAPPENED...?

WE GOT ZAPPED TO THE WRONG PLACE.

I WAITED TOO LONG TO TELEPORT YOU. I LOST CONCENTRATION AND--

WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT?

WHAT DID THE SIPHON DO TO ME?

HE TOOK IT. A MORTAL TOOK *MY* POWER.

TAKE IT EASY. YOU'VE SURVIVED ON DECAF BEFORE, RIGHT?

NO, THIS TIME, SOMETHING FEELS...

...DIFFERENT.

WHERE IS THE COUNCIL?

THEY FLED.

THE MOST POWERFUL PEOPLE THIS SIDE OF HELL *RAN* FROM A FIGHT?

THE COUNCIL'S MISSION IS TO PROTECT WHAT LITTLE MAGIC REMAINS.

WE CANNOT DO THAT IF THE SIPHON STEALS *OURS.*

THE COUNCIL IS REGROUPING...

...*WITHOUT* YOU.

WHAT OF THE PROMISES YOU MADE US? YOU STILL OWE ME INFORMATION.

NO PROMISES HAVE BEEN BROKEN. YOU FAILED.

NOW, I MUST JOIN THE OTHERS.

WE'VE GOT BIGGER PROBLEMS THAN FINDING WHO THREW YOU IN JAIL, KOH. AND THE PARTY BALLOON'S RIGHT. WE FAILED BIG TIME.

SORRY ABOUT THAT, ILLYRIA.

I DO NOT REQUIRE AN APOLOGY, SLAYER.

I AM MORE CONCERNED WITH WHAT THE SIPHON WILL DO WITH MY POWER.

HE COULD BE ANYWHERE. OR *ANY TIME.* UNDOING ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING THAT LEADS TO HIS GIRLFRIEND ENDING UP A CORPSE.

WHAT HAPPENS IF SEVERIN SUCCEEDS? PARADOX? NEW TIMELINE? OR SOMETHING ELSE THAT'S GONNA MAKE MY HEAD HURT?

UNDER THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES, UNDOING THE PAST COULD LEAD TO A MINOR *APOCALYPSE.*

I THOUGHT SHATTERING THE SEED MEANT I COULD DELETE THE A-WORD FROM MY VOCABULARY.

WE MUST HOPE THE COUNCIL STOPS THE SIPHON.

I DON'T HAVE A LOT OF FAITH IN PEOPLE WHO RUN FROM A FIGHT. AND SINCE I'VE GOT MORE EXPERIENCE THAN ANYONE I KNOW WITH END-OF-THE-WORLDS, I'M NOT GOING TO SIT THIS ONE OUT.

WE'RE GOING TO NEED HELP.

WHO WILL HELP US?

"MY FRIENDS."

NEURAL TRANSFER IS READY.

YOU WANT ME TO GO THROUGH WITH THIS, RIGHT? YOU SURE BUFFY'S GOING TO BE OKAY WITH IT?

I MEAN, ONCE WE STABILIZE HER, I'LL BUILD A DAWNBOT...OR A MECHA DAWN... OR WHATEVER YOU WANT TO CALL IT.

I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE BOT.

I JUST WANT HER TO BE OKAY.

DO IT.

PAFT
PAFT

WOW. YOU'RE GOOD--

YOU MEAN FOR SOMEONE WHO'S *NOT* REALLY A SLAYER...

...UNLIKE *YOU.*

DOES BUFFY KNOW YOU'RE PACKING WOOD?

I SERVED WITH THE CHICAGO SQUAD, SO I NEVER ACTUALLY MET BUFFY FACE TO FACE.

SHE THINKS I BELONG TO THE UNCHOSEN MASSES.

SO WHAT... YOU'RE BIG BROTHERING HER?

CHILL, SLAYER BOY.

CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF, SOME OF THE SLAYER ARMY ACTUALLY STAYED LOYAL TO BUFFY. WE WORRIED THE REST OF THE WORLD WOULDN'T BE SO UNDERSTANDING.

WE WERE RIGHT.

MY MISSION IS TO *PROTECT* BUFFY.

FROM LATE RENT. ANGRY ROOMIES. FUNKY MILK IN THE FRIDGE. AND ALL THE OTHER PRIVILEGES THAT COME WITH BEING BROKE AND TWENTY-SOMETHING.

AND IT WORKED. I EASED TUMBLE INTO THE IDEA THAT WE WERE LIVING WITH A SLAYER. "FOUND" HER STASH O' WEAPONS TO GET HIM COMFORTABLE HAVING SHARP, POINTY OBJECTS IN THE HOUSE.

AND DON'T EVEN ASK ME HOW MANY TIMES I PAID BUFFY'S SHARE OF THE RENT.

IF YOU'RE THE GOOD GUY, WHY DID I CATCH YOU CREEPING AROUND HER ROOM?

BECAUSE I WAS SUSPICIOUS OF *YOU.*

BUT SINCE YOU RISKED YOUR LIFE WALKING INTO THIS VAMPIRE NEST TWICE--

--I'M THINKING WE'RE BOTH THE GOOD GUY.

OOF!

SORRY. THE ROOMIES DON'T LIKE ME TO BRING MY WORK HOME.

I DON'T LIKE FEELING THIS WAY.

I THOUGHT BILLY WOULD BE HOME.

LET ME FIND MY PHONE TO PUT OUT AN S.O.S.

I SHOULD BE DEAD.

NOT ON MY WATCH--OKAY, USUALLY I DO KILL DEMONS ON MY WATCH--BUT RIGHT NOW I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU END *ANYTHING* BEFORE WE STOP SEVERIN.

MAYBE YOU CAN'T GET ALL TIME BENDY OR THROW A TWO-TON PUNCH, BUT SEVERIN STOLE *YOUR* POWERS--WHICH MAKES *YOU* AN EXPERT ON HOW TO STOP HIM.

AND IF YOU'RE FEELING SELF-CONSCIOUS ABOUT THE HAIR, I COULD PROBABLY FIND SOME BLUE L'ORÉAL--

YOU MISUNDERSTAND ME, SLAYER. I DO NOT WANT TO END MY EXISTENCE.

I *SHOULD* BE DEAD.

THIS BODY IS A VESSEL.

WHEN THE SIPHON RIPPED MY POWER FROM ME, IT SHOULD HAVE LEFT A HOLLOW SHELL BEHIND.

LIKE ALL THE ZOMPIRES SEV KILLED...LIKE HIS GIRLFRIEND...

SO WHAT MAKES YOU DIFFERENT?

A QUESTION I WOULD LIKE ANSWERED AS WELL.

BUFFY?

WHOA. SORRY. I'LL COME BACK.

AND DON'T WORRY. I'M TOTALLY DOWN WITH THE WHOLE FIFTY SHADES OF DEMON THING.

WHAT? NO. *WAIT!*

THERE IS AN UNUSUAL AMOUNT OF LEATHER IN THIS ROOM SO I UNDERSTAND THE CONFUSION--

BUT THIS IS A PERFECTLY INNOCENT DISCUSSION ABOUT AN IMPENDING TIME POCALYPSE.

IF IT ENDS IN "POCALYPSE" THAT'S BAD, RIGHT?

IS THAT WHY XANDER KEEPS LEAVING MESSAGES? YOU GOTTA STOP LOSING YOUR CELL...

DAWN.

IS IT WORKING?

WHOSE HAND SHOULD I BE HOLDING?

...

WHY AREN'T YOU SAYING SOMETHING ANNOYING AND INAPPROPRIATE? NO *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* REFERENCE? *FREAKY FRIDAY?* THE FRIGGIN' *CHANGE-UP?*

WHAT'S WRONG?

WAIT. REWIND THE FOOTAGE.

BEFORE BUFFY GOT HER BUTT KICKED ACROSS THE ROOM.

SOMETHING CAUGHT HER OFF GUARD.

I KNOW HER.

THAT'S WHAT BUFFY SAID.

YOU'RE AWAKE?

UNTIL THE PAINKILLERS KICK IN AGAIN. WHICH I HOPE IS VERY SOON.

I'M SORRY I EVER LED US INTO THE NEST--

DON'T BLAME YOURSELF. I'VE BEEN DOWN THAT ROAD, AND IT DOESN'T LEAD ANY PLACE HELPFUL.

WHATEVER YOU'RE FEELING--PUT IT INTO THE DETECTIVE WORK.

HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT ZOMPIRE?

TESSA FREER. SHE WAS ON RONA'S SQUAD WITH ME...SHE DITCHED THE SLAYER ARMY TO FOLLOW SIMONE ON HER WORLD TOUR OF MAYHEM.

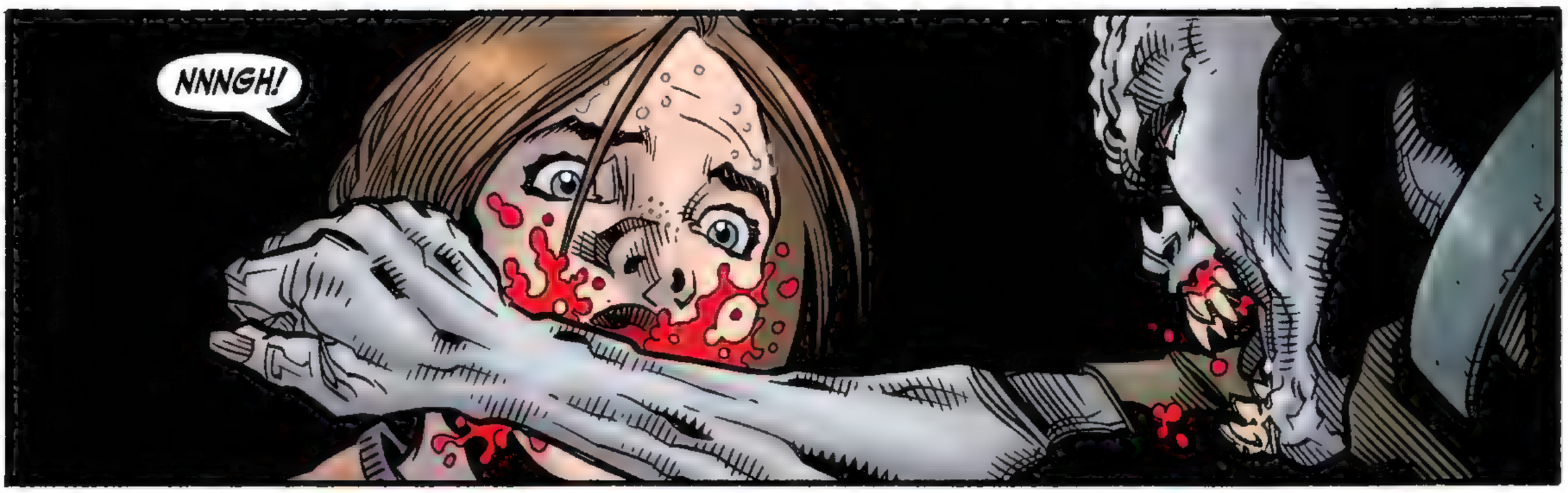
A SLAYER-ZOMPIRE HYBRID? IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE?

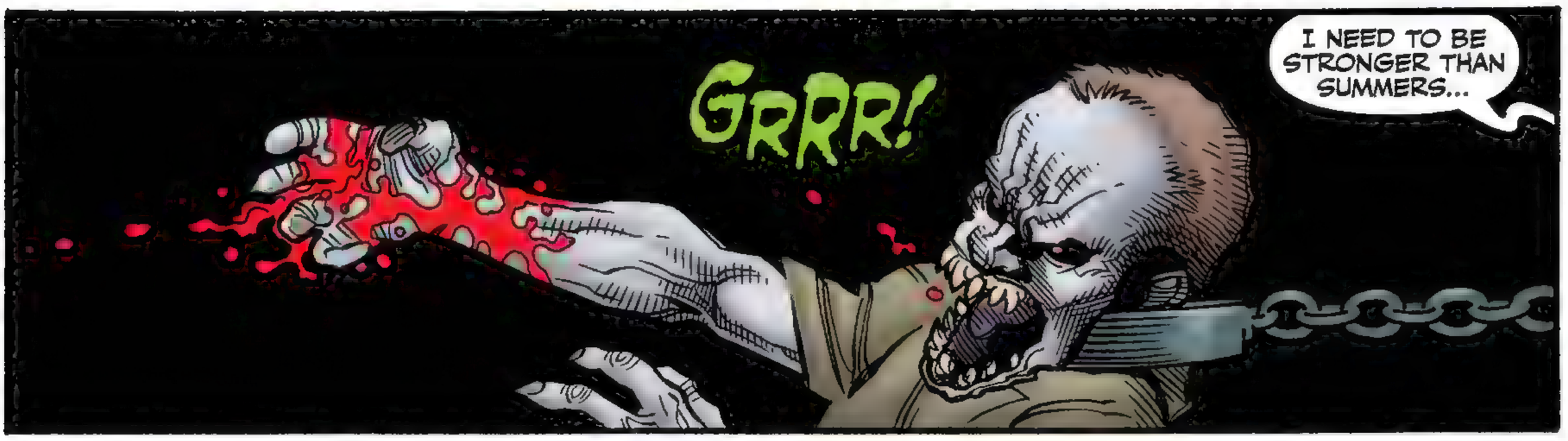
EXPLAINS THE EXTRA-SUPER-STRENGTH. BUT IF THIS GIRL HUNG UP HER STAKE, HOW'D SHE GET SIRED?

WHY ARE YOU *DOING* THIS? I FOLLOWED *YOU* WHEN YOU WALKED AWAY FROM BUFFY! I'VE BEEN WITH YOU FROM *THE BEGINNING!*

THEN *SHUT UP* AND BE A GOOD SOLDIER!
NO! PLEASE! NO!
GRRR!

GRRR!


NNNGH!


GRRR!
I NEED TO BE STRONGER THAN SUMMERS...

...AND I'M NOT GOING TO EXPERIMENT ON MYSELF.

WE TRIED TO TRANSFER HER CONSCIOUSNESS INTO THE BUFFY-BOT...

...BUT IT'S NOT WORKING.

AND IF WE DON'T FIGURE OUT WHY SOON...DAWN'S GOING TO--

IF THE NEXT WORDS OUT OF YOUR MOUTH AREN'T "BE" AND "OKAY," PREFERABLY IN THAT ORDER, STOP TALKING.

SHUTTING UP.

THESE ARE NOT BRAIN WAVES.

THAT'S MYSTICAL ENERGY.

AND IT'S LEAVING HER BODY.

THE KEY.

WAY BACK WHEN I WAS AN ONLY CHILD, SOME MONKS WERE TRYING TO PROTECT A MYSTICAL KEY MADE OF LIVING ENERGY.

WHEN THEY COULDN'T KEEP IT FROM A DEMON NAMED GLORIFICUS-- WHO, SIDEBAR, MIGHT HAVE RUN IN THE SAME CIRCLES YOU DID-- THEY TURNED THE KEY INTO *MY* SISTER.

SO I'D PROTECT HER.

WHICH I SHOULD HAVE BEEN DOING INSTEAD OF PLAYING MAGIC POLICE WITH YOU...

EVEN IF YOU HAD BEEN HERE, THERE'S LITTLE YOU COULD DO TO STOP THIS.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND. THOSE MONKS TURNED THE KEY INTO DAWN. FLESH AND BLOOD-- AND BONES AND ORGANS AND LOTS OF OTHER SQUISHY STUFF. THE POINT IS...

SHE'S REAL.

THANKS TO MAGIC. AND THE MAGIC THAT WAS LEFT INSIDE HER IS NOW FADING.

WHY? *SEVERIN?* DID HE DO THIS?

THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE SIPHON.

OH.

DAWN'S DYING BECAUSE I DESTROYED THE SEED.

GRRR!

PAFT

STILL PLAYING WITH VAMPIRES?

NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES YOU TRY, THEY'RE ALL GOING TO BE DUDS.

COPYCAT.

WHY ARE YOU STILL HERE?

YOU MEAN WHY AM I STILL *NOW?*

TRAVELING THROUGH TIME'S HARDER THAN I THOUGHT. EVEN WITH ALL THE MOJO I COLLECTED, I BARELY HAVE ENOUGH POWER TO CHANGE WHAT I ATE FOR BREAKFAST.

I NEED *MORE.*

AND YOU'RE GOING TO HELP ME GET IT.

WHY WOULD I DO THAT?

YOU WANT TO BE THE ONLY VAMPIRE THAT BUFFY CAN'T SLAY?

YOU'RE GOING TO NEED MY HELP.

I SHOULD HAVE BEEN HERE SOONER, XAN.

BUT WE'RE GOING TO FIX THIS.

NOW'S THE PART WHEN YOU AGREE WITH ME SO WE CAN START TO MAKE A--

GET OFF!
XANDER!

BAM

I CAN'T LOSE HER!

BAM

BAM

BAM

BAM

--XANDER!

GET. OFF. ME.

YOU THINK THIS IS MY FAULT, DON'T YOU?

I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE.

AND IF YOU CAME UP HERE HOPING I'D LET YOU OFF THE HOOK FOR WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOUR SISTER, I'M JUST GOING TO PUT YOU RIGHT BACK ON IT.

BUFFY, WE'RE GOING TO LOSE DAWN BECAUSE--

--I DESTROYED THE SEED? *I KNOW.*

I ALREADY COVERED THAT DOWNSTAIRS.

BUT HERE'S THE GIANT ASTERISK THAT GOES AFTER THAT SENTENCE.

IF I HADN'T DESTROYED THE SEED, THE WORLD WOULD HAVE ENDED IN A BLAZE OF TWILIGHT-FUELED ARMAGEDDON.

AND YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH DAWN WOULD HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO A COUPLE OF DAYS OF WHAT-MIGHT-HAVE-BEEN. NO COZY APARTMENT. NO HI-HONEY-I'M-HOME. NO HAPPY LITTLE LIFE TOGETHER.

I GAVE YOU MORE TIME, XANDER. I GAVE DAWN MORE TIME. I GAVE *EVERYONE* MORE TIME.

SO LET'S FOCUS ON THE CONVERSATION THAT REALLY MATTERS--*HOW TO SAVE DAWN'S LIFE NOW.*

NICE SPEECH, BUFF.

YOU'RE RIGHT. I CAN'T BLAME YOU FOR WHAT HAPPENED AFTER YOU DESTROYED THE SEED.

BUT I CAN BLAME YOU FOR WHAT HAPPENED *BEFORE.*

WHAT?

YOU REALLY NEVER THOUGHT THIS THROUGH?

IF YOU AND ANGEL HADN'T BONED A NEW UNIVERSE INTO EXISTENCE, THE SEED OF EVERYTHING'S-GOING-TO-GO-TO-$%#@-IF-YOU-SMASH-IT NEVER WOULD HAVE NEEDED TO BE SMASHED.

AND DAWN WOULD STILL BE A REAL GIRL WHOSE BATTERY ISN'T RUNNING OUT OF JUICE.

WHAT HAPPENED WITH TWILIGHT...INVOLVED A LOT OF THINGS THAT WERE OUT OF MY CONTROL.

YEAH, I GET IT. THE UNIVERSE GAVE YOU AND ANGEL SO MUCH MYSTICAL MOJO... NEITHER ONE OF YOU COULD KEEP IT IN YOUR SUPERPOWERED PANTS.

IT WAS A PROPHECY. MILLENNIA IN THE MAKING. EVERYTHING I DID THAT LED UP TO IT...I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS ADDING UP TO. *IF* GILES HAD WARNED--

DO NOT SAY IT.

XANDER, I WAS JUST TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD.

IT ALWAYS STARTS WITH YOU TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD, BUFFY.

BUT THAT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT EVERY TIME YOU SAVE IT...

...SOMEHOW THE WORLD JUST KEEPS GETTING WORSE.

SO YOU WON'T BLAME ME IF I TRY TO SAVE DAWN WITHOUT YOUR HELP.

'CAUSE RIGHT NOW, I CAN'T FACE THINGS GETTING ANY WORSE THAN THEY ALREADY ARE.

XANDER--

BE MAD. BLAME ME. BUT DAWN'S MY SISTER. AND YOU'RE *NOT* DOING THIS WITHOUT ME.

I WENT DOWN THERE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

THE WATCHER

BUFFY...WHAT HAPPENED?

DID WE... DID WE WIN?

BUT I DIDN'T.

I'VE WATCHED A LOT OF PEOPLE DIE.

TARA.

ANYA.

RENEE.

GILES.

BUT THAT'S WHAT I DO.

WATCH.

AND WATCH.

AND WATCH.

IT BUILDS UP IN YOU.

HIDES IN YOU.

BECOMES A PART OF YOU.

WHAT...WHAT HAPPENED TO GILES?

YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW IT'S THERE.

UNTIL IT FINALLY MAKES YOU DO SOMETHING BESIDES WATCH.

THWAK

YOU KILLED HIM.

IT--

THWAK

--WASN'T--

THWAK

--ME--

THWAK

...TWILIGHT...

THWAK

YOU ALWAYS HAVE AN EXCUSE.

GUESS WHAT?

I DON'T CARE.

NO--

HE KILLED GILES!

YEAH, BUT, XANDER, THIS ISN'T--

--ME?!

PLEASE.

I CAN'T LOSE ANYBODY ELSE. I CAN'T LOSE *YOU.*

THAT'S THE POINT!

I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING...

...SO I DON'T FEEL SO...

USELESS?

USELESS.

THAT'S EXACTLY HOW I FEEL NOW.

TIMES A GOOGOLPLEX.

FAITH'S CURRENTLY OCCUPIED. AND SELF-CENTERED...

KENNEDY'S GIRLS WOULDN'T KNOW MAGIC IF IT TURNED THEM INTO A CENTAUR.

SPIKE'S... WHO KNOWS WHERE SPIKE AND HIS MERRY BAND OF BUGS WENT.

KOH AND ILLYRIA SNUCK OFF TO LOOK FOR THE COUNCIL.

AND THE COUNCIL... WELL, THE COUNCIL ALREADY THINKS THEY'RE CLEANING UP MY MESS.

SO I GUESS THAT LEAVES...

US.

XANDER, WHATEVER BLAME YOU'VE PINNED ON ME, UNPIN IT.

FOR DAWN.

'CAUSE THE ONLY WAY WE'RE GOING TO FIX THIS IS *TOGETHER.*

YOU'RE STILL NOT TALKING TO HER?

TELL BUFFY *I* WALKED AWAY FROM ALL THINGS THAT START WITH SUPER AND END WITH NATURAL.

SO HOW AM I GOING TO HELP?

BUFFY, XANDER WANTED ME TO--

IS HE REALLY GOING TO MAKE YOU REPEAT EVERYTHING?

ARE YOU REALLY GOING TO MAKE ME REPEAT EVERYTHING?

I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU DO, ANDREW.

HE DOESN'T CARE--

ANDREW, TELL XANDER THAT JUST BECAUSE HE DOESN'T HAVE THE ANSWER DOESN'T MEAN I DON'T NEED HIM.

HE MAY THINK THIS IS MY FAULT. AND MAYBE IT IS. BUT IF I DON'T FIX IT-- BECAUSE HE DOESN'T HAVE MY BACK-- HE'S JUST AS MUCH TO BLAME.

XANDER, WHERE ARE YOU--

--HEY, *WATCH* IT!

SIGH.

SIGH.

SORRY.

I WALKED AWAY FROM THE BIG BAD WORLD OF SLAYING. AND I DID IT FOR DAWN. SO WE COULD HAVE SOME KIND OF A SHOT AT A NORMAL LIFE.

AND THAT MAKES ME THE LEAST EQUIPPED TO SAVE HER.

IT'S LIKE THE SEED CHAMBER ALL OVER AGAIN.

JUST LIKE WITH EVERYBODY BEFORE THAT.

THERE'S ONLY ONE THING I CAN DO.

WATCH.

WHAT THE--

!

OOOF!

SORRY FOR THE BUMPY LANDING...

...I'M STILL FIGURING OUT ALL THE BELLS AND WHISTLES.

I KNOW HOW TO USE MINE. SO DON'T TRY ANYTHING STUPID.

DOFFLER!

AW! YOU REMEMBER!

SEND ME BACK! NOW!

YOU'RE HERE BECAUSE YOU AND I *AREN'T* THAT DIFFERENT.

WHEN DID YOU GET SO... ANGRY?

I LIKE IT.

click.

YOU'RE ABOUT TO LOSE YOUR GIRLFRIEND, HUH?

Thump

I ALREADY LOST MINE.

YOU'RE THAT VACUUM-CLEANER GUY WHO TRIED TO STEAL BUFFY'S POWERS.

WHEN DID YOU START SINGING BACKUP FOR ZIGGY STARDUST?

THIS ISN'T FOR ME!

"THIS IS FOR CLARE."

DON'T YOU WISH THIS COULD LAST FOREVER?

IT CAN.

HOW?

YOU WANT TO BECOME A VAMPIRE?

IF MY GIRLFRIEND HADN'T TURNED INTO A ZOMPIRE, SHE'D STILL BE AROUND.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS HAS TO DO WITH *ME.*

YOU BOTH LOST SOMEONE.

AND YOU CAN BOTH BLAME IT ON ONE PERSON.

BUFFY.

OOOH! IS THAT HIM?

NO, WAIT, THAT'S A TRASH BAG. DON'T WORRY. XANDER WILL SHOW.

I DON'T HAVE TIME TO WORRY ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENING TO HIM.

ANDREW, I KIND OF CAME UP HERE TO BE...

...ALONE. NOT THE FIRST TIME I'VE HEARD THAT.

BUFFY--

NO MATTER WHAT XANDER THINKS...

...YOU'RE GOING TO SAVE YOUR SISTER.

THANKS, ANDREW.

BE NICE TO HEAR THAT FROM SOMEONE I TRUST.

LIKE ME?

AND SINCE I LEFT WITHOUT PROPERLY SAYING GOODBYE, I BROUGHT YOU A PEACE OFFERING...

...IRONICALLY, IN THE FORM OF AN EXTREMELY LETHAL WEAPON.

WILLOW.

THIS ISN'T A DREAM THIS TIME...?

AFRAID NOT.

BUT THE SCYTHE--IT LOOKS...LIKE IT GOT A NEW PAINT JOB.

YOU WANT ME TO TAKE IT BACK?

NO. DON'T TAKE *ANYTHING* BACK. YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW BADLY I MISSED YOU. AND HOW MUCH I NEED YOU RIGHT NOW.

WHAT'S WRONG?

IT'S DAWN. SHE'S FADING AND-- WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?!

OH BABY, TALES OF MY ADVENTURE CAN WAIT.

IT LOOKS LIKE MY ABSENCE HAS BEEN ROUGHER ON YOU THAN ME.

WHAT HAPPENED?

THE SCAR? KENNEDY. WOLFRAM AND HART. KOH'S MAGIC BLADE. IT'S NOT IMPORTANT.

HANG ON. IT MAKES YOU LOOK WORRIED...

HEY, THANKS.

WILLOW--

YOU HAVE MAGIC?!

IT'S LIMITED. AND I'M STILL FIGURING OUT HOW TO CONTROL IT HERE, BUT YEAH...

I'M BACK IN THE GAME.

OH, BUFFY.

I THOUGHT XANDER WAS RIGHT. I DIDN'T THINK I WAS GOING TO BE ABLE TO SAVE DAWN.

"BUT WITH YOU HERE, WILL, WE CAN.

"ALL OF US.

"TOGETHER."

YOU'RE LOSING HER, HARRIS.

THIS IS JUST A PICTURE. WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WHEN THIS DISAPPEARING ACT STARTS HAPPENING TO *HER?*

STOP IT!

XANDER, I CAN UNDO IT.

HOW?

YOU THINK I WANT TO LOOK LIKE A SMURF?

THANKS TO ILLYRIA, FORMERLY THE MERCILESS, I CAN TURN BACK TIME.

BUT GOING BACK TO *UNDO* THINGS THAT HAVE ALREADY OCCURRED-- WITHOUT TEARING APART THE UNIVERSE-- REQUIRES A LOT OF POWER.

AND, BELIEVE IT OR NOT, WE NEED YOU TO HELP US GET IT.

YOU WANT TO REWIND THE CLOCK AND KEEP YOUR GIRLFRIEND FROM TURNING INTO THE SPECIAL UNDEAD? I'M NOT GOING TO STOP YOU.

IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE. SOMETHING TELLS ME SHE'S STILL GOING TO WANT TO BE A VAMPIRE.

I NEED TO THINK BIGGER.

YOU'RE GOING TO STOP BUFFY FROM SMASHING THE SEED?

YOU REALLY WANT TO LIVE IN A DEMON-FILLED APOCALYPSE? 'CAUSE I DON'T.

NO, BUFFY NEEDED TO DESTROY THE SEED.

I NEED TO STOP TWILIGHT FROM EVER HAPPENING.

SO YOU'RE GOING TO...*KILL BUFFY?*

NO. I'M NOT A BAD GUY.

I'M OKAY WITH THAT LABEL.

THERE ARE OTHER WAYS TO STOP BUFFY FROM BIRTHING A NEW UNIVERSE.

WE JUST NEED TO STOP TWILIGHT.

I WAS ALL FOR KILLING HER.

AND TO MAKE SEVERIN'S ETCH-A-SKETCH A REALITY ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS STEAL A BOOK FOR US. BIG, HEAVY, STARTS WITH A "V," ENDS WITH AN "R."

THE BOOK GILES LEFT BUFFY.

LOOK--DESPITE THE EYE PATCH, WHICH I ADMIT GIVES ME TONS OF VILLAIN CRED--I'M NOT GOING TO BETRAY BUFFY. GILES LEFT HER THAT BOOK FOR A REASON. AND IT WASN'T SO *YOU* COULD START A BOOK CLUB.

BUT YOU'RE WRONG. YOU WON'T BE BETRAYING BUFFY. YOU'LL BE HELPING HER.

XANDER, EVERYONE GETS WHAT THEY WANT. YOU. ME. DAWN. EVEN BUFFY.

DO YOU THINK BUFFY'S HAPPY WITH ANYTHING THAT HAPPENED IN HER LIFE SINCE THE MOMENT SHE HOPPED ON THE TWILIGHT TRAIN?

WHAT EXACTLY DO *YOU* GET?

I GET ANOTHER SHOT AT TRYING TO MAKE THE GREAT SLAYER DREAM COME TRUE.

YOU MEAN NIGHTMARE?

IF THIS WORKS--

AND IT'S GOING TO WORK.

--BUFFY WILL NEVER EVEN KNOW YOU HELPED US.

YOU WON'T EVEN KNOW YOU HELPED US.

YOU'LL JUST GET TO BE WITH DAWN.

RIGHT NOW BUFFY'S TRYING TO COOK UP SOME SCHEME TO SAVE DAWN WITH WHOEVER STILL CARES ENOUGH TO HELP HER...

CAN YOU SAVE HER?

BUFFY, I DON'T KNOW.

"...BUT I GUARANTEE YOU BUFFY'S NOT SURE IF HER PLAN'S GOING TO WORK."

XANDER, WE *KNOW* OUR PLAN WILL.

"DAWN'S YOUR GIRLFRIEND."

YOU HAVE TO TRY, WILL.

"SO WHY LEAVE IT UP TO BUFFY TO SAVE HER?"

WHATEVER'S BUILDING UP INSIDE YOU--HOLD ONTO IT.

AND PUT IT TO USE.

AS MUCH AS I HATE AGREEING WITH TANK GIRL, MAYBE SHE'S RIGHT.

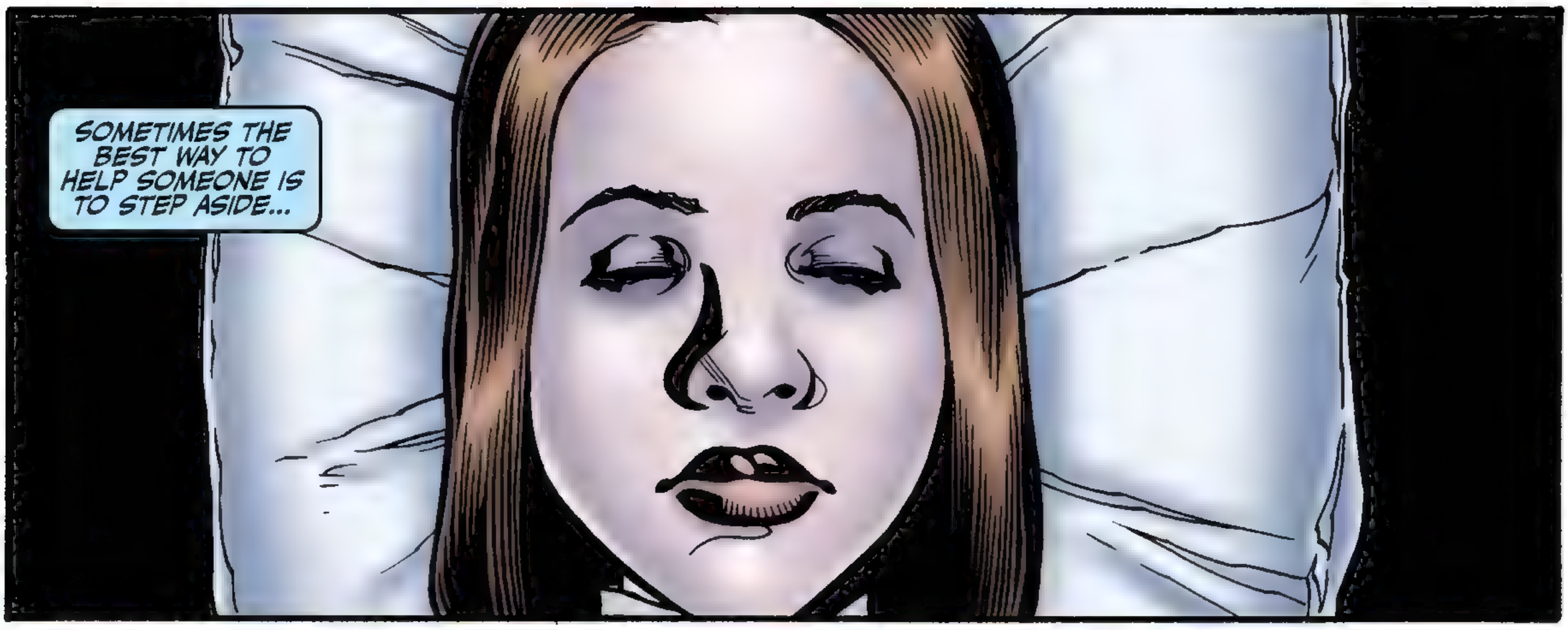
ARE YOU IN?

MAYBE I DON'T HAVE TO WATCH THIS TIME.

MAYBE I DON'T HAVE TO FEEL SO...

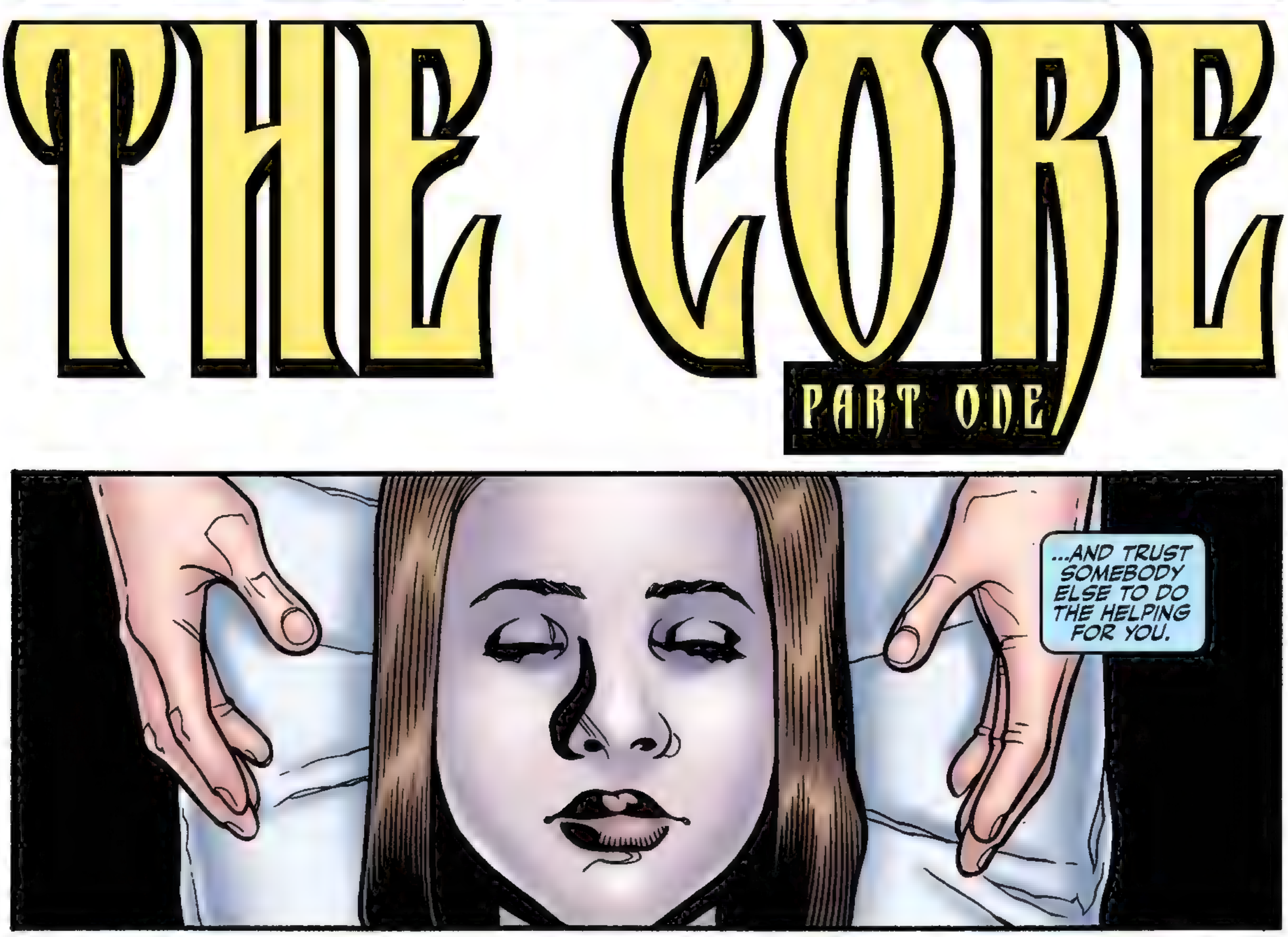
USELESS.

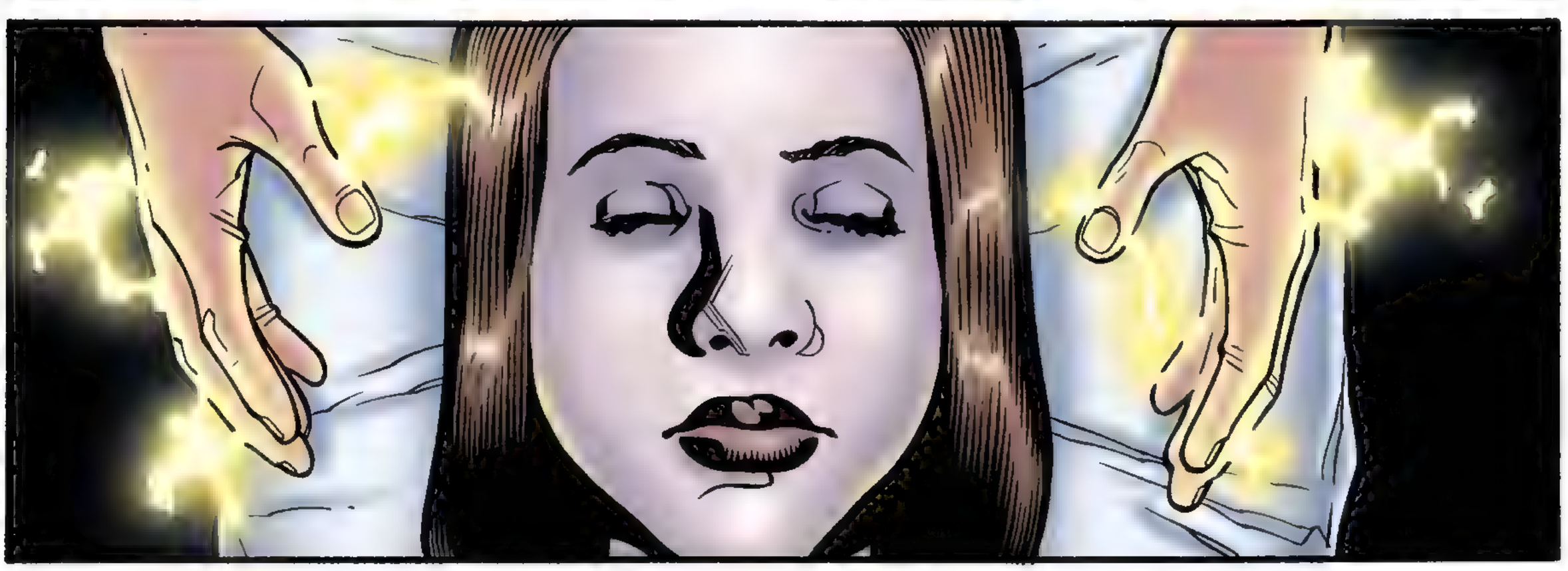
I'M IN.



THE CORE

PART ONE





BUT THE TRICKY THING WITH STEPPING ASIDE...

NAVITAS LUX LUCIS REPLEO.

NAVITAS IN MIHI RECRO KEY.

...IS THE STEPPING ASIDE.

IS IT WORKING?

EVERYTHING'S DIFFERENT NOW, BUFFY.

IT'S GOING TO TAKE MORE THAN A SIMPLE SPELL TO FIX THIS.

HAVE YOU TRIED A COMPLEX SPELL--?

DON'T WORRY. I'M ALL THE WAY UP TO EXTREMELY ELABORATE...

...AND WORKING MY WAY UP TO NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE.

BUT IT'S GOING TO TAKE TIME. AND I KNOW IT'S BEEN AGES SINCE WE'VE HAD SOME QUALITY GIRL TALK...

...BUT THE QUESTIONS AREN'T HELPING.

OH. RIGHT. HINT HEARD. HINT ABOUT TO BE TAKEN.

BUT WHEN YOU FACE THE WORLD WITH PEOPLE YOU TRUST...

...HOW CAN YOU LOSE?

1961

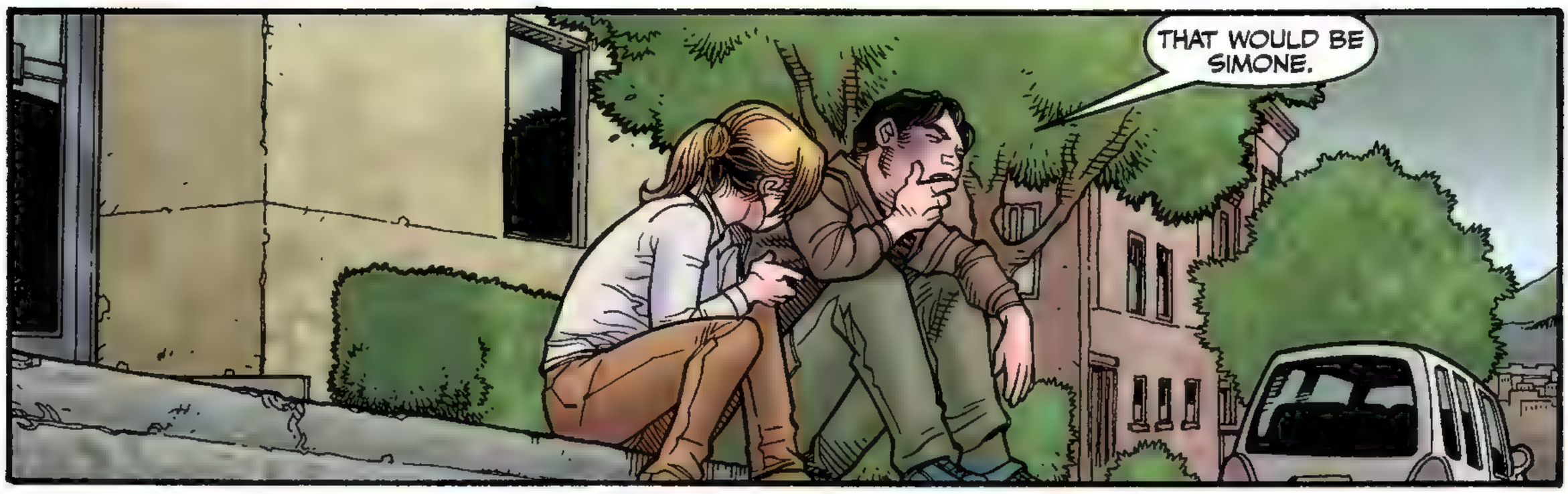
XANDER?!

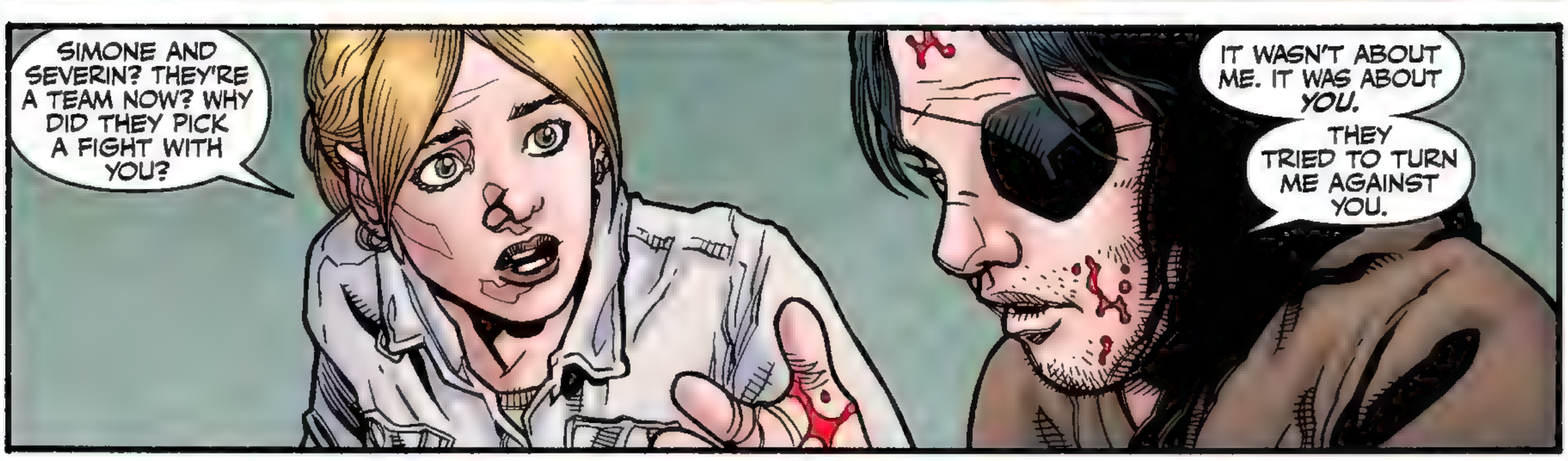
WHO? WHAT? DID WILLOW--

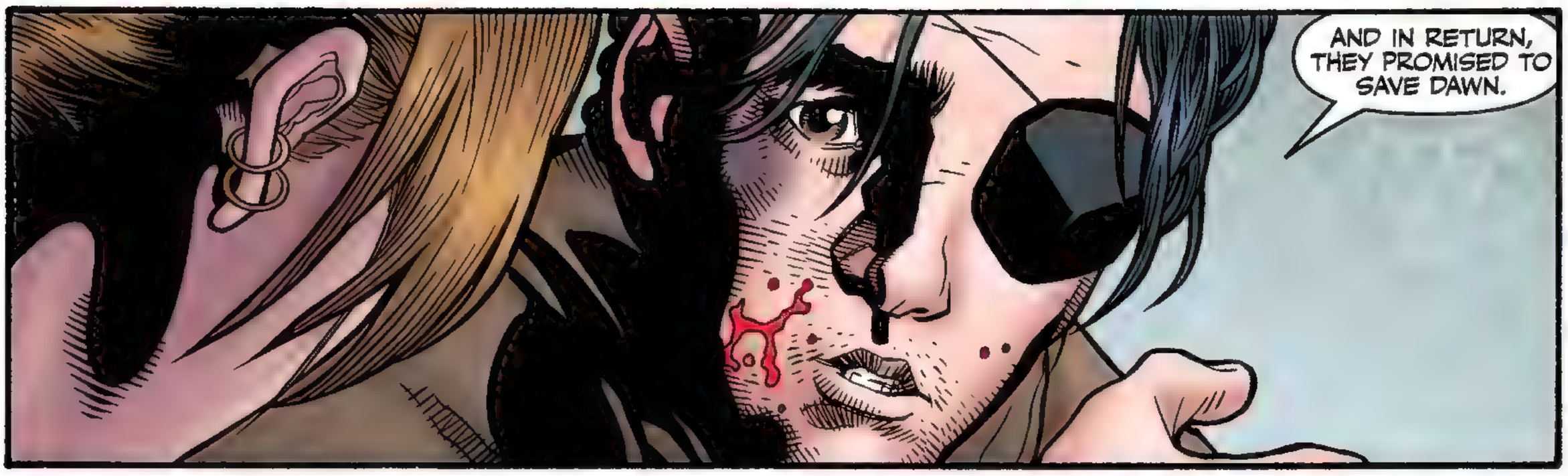
SEVERIN--HE GAVE ME A RIDE HOME...

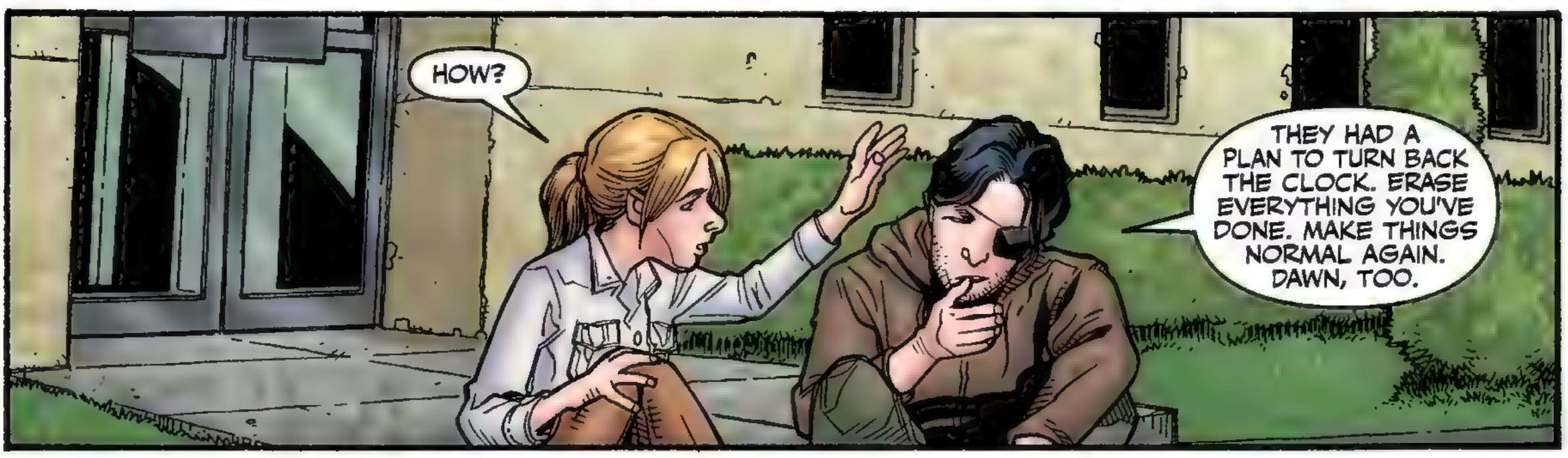
OH GOD.

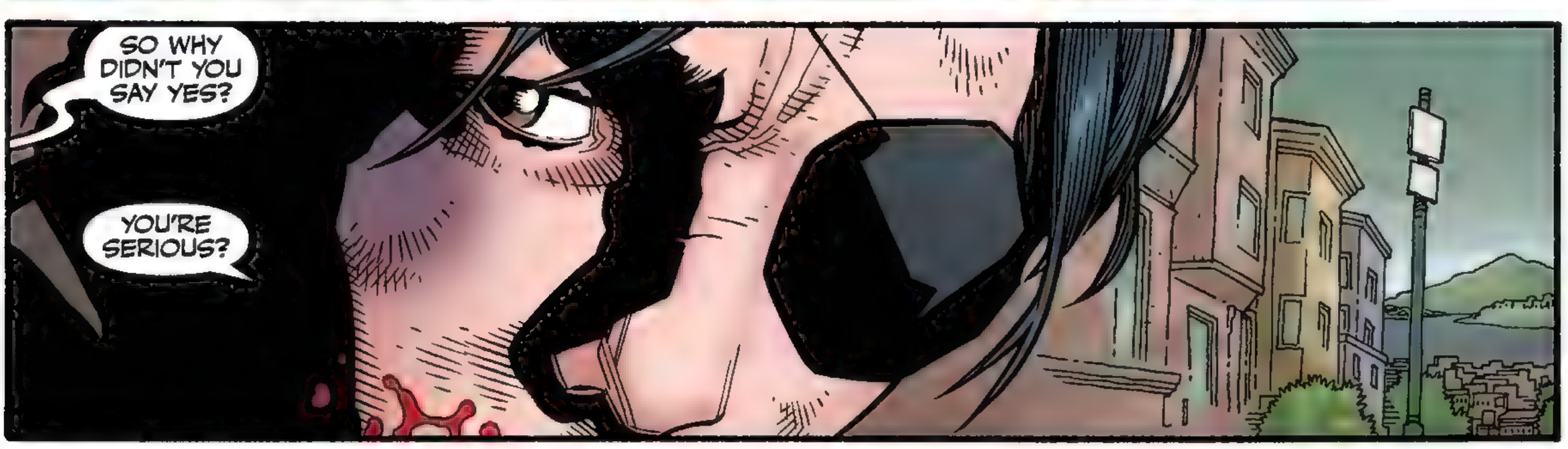
WHO GAVE YOU EVERYTHING ELSE?


THAT WOULD BE SIMONE.


SIMONE AND SEVERIN? THEY'RE A TEAM NOW? WHY DID THEY PICK A FIGHT WITH YOU?
IT WASN'T ABOUT ME. IT WAS ABOUT YOU.
THEY TRIED TO TURN ME AGAINST YOU.


AND IN RETURN, THEY PROMISED TO SAVE DAWN.


HOW?
THEY HAD A PLAN TO TURN BACK THE CLOCK. ERASE EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE. MAKE THINGS NORMAL AGAIN. DAWN, TOO.


SO WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY YES?
YOU'RE SERIOUS?

THANKS FOR THE VOTE OF VERY-LITTLE-TO-NO CONFIDENCE.

YOU REALLY THINK I'D BETRAY MY BEST FRIEND?

OH. YEAH. OUR FIGHT. WALLS PUNCHED. THINGS SAID THAT CAN'T BE UNSAID.

IT BOILED DOWN TO ONE THING. SOMETHING I FORGOT LAST NIGHT. A LONG TIME AGO...

...YOU DIED SO DAWN COULD LIVE.

NO WAY SEVERIN AND SIMONE WOULD EVER FIGHT THAT HARD.

THANKS, XANDER.

OW-OW-OW-OW!

THE TORTURE'S SUPPOSED TO STOP AFTER YOU ESCAPE THE BAD GUYS!

SO WHAT EXACTLY DID EVIL AND EVILER WANT FROM YOU?

THEY WANTED ME TO STEAL THE BOOK GILES LEFT YOU.

WHY DOES SIMONE WANT THAT BOOK? SHE'S REJECTED EVERY SLAYER BONE IN HER BODY.

AND NEARLY BROKEN EVERY BONE IN MINE.

I DON'T KNOW-- THEY WOULDN'T SAY. BUT THEY WANTED THE BOOK TO SHOW THEM WHERE TO GET THE POWER THEY NEEDED TO--

BOOM

...OUCH...

WILLOW?!

WILLOW'S BACK? WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME WILLOW'S BACK?

DOES THE BOOM MEAN IT WORKED?

I THINK IT MEANS I EXCEEDED MY RECOMMENDED DAILY ALLOWANCE OF MAGIC.

THERE'S STILL A LOT TO GET USED TO NOW THAT I'M BEWITCHED AGAIN.

SO, DAWN...?

SORRY, BUFFY, BUT I THINK WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO KEEP TRYING.

KEEP TRYING...

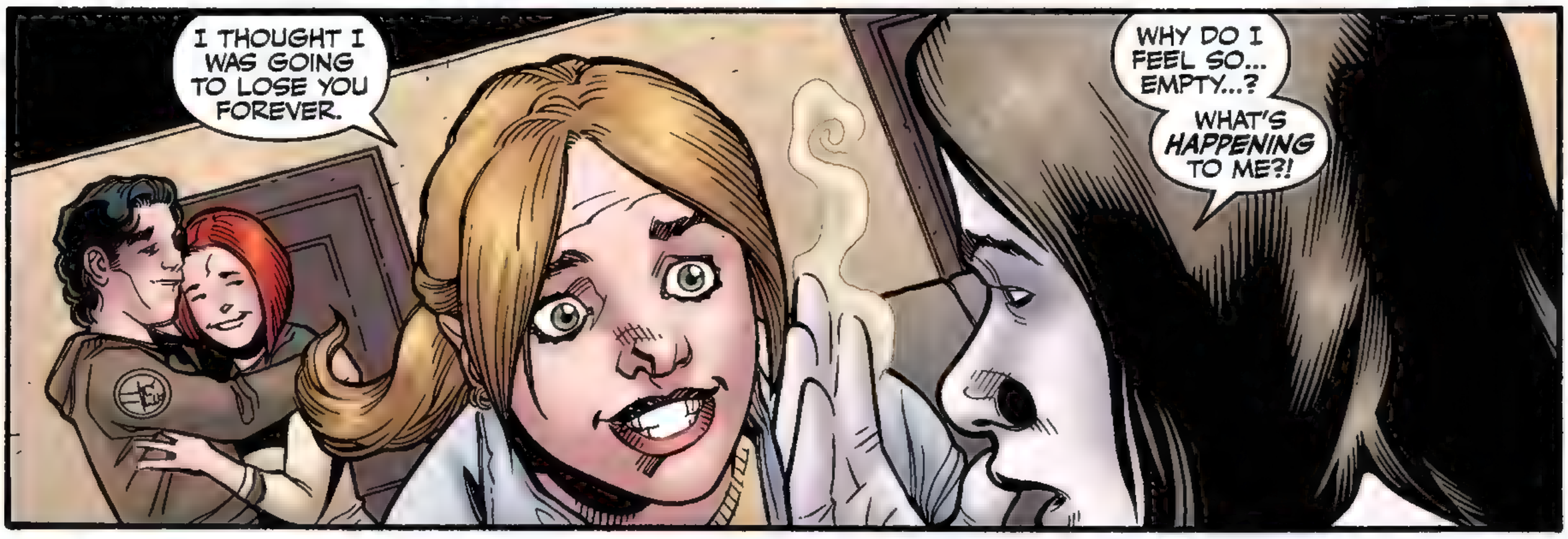
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FACE?

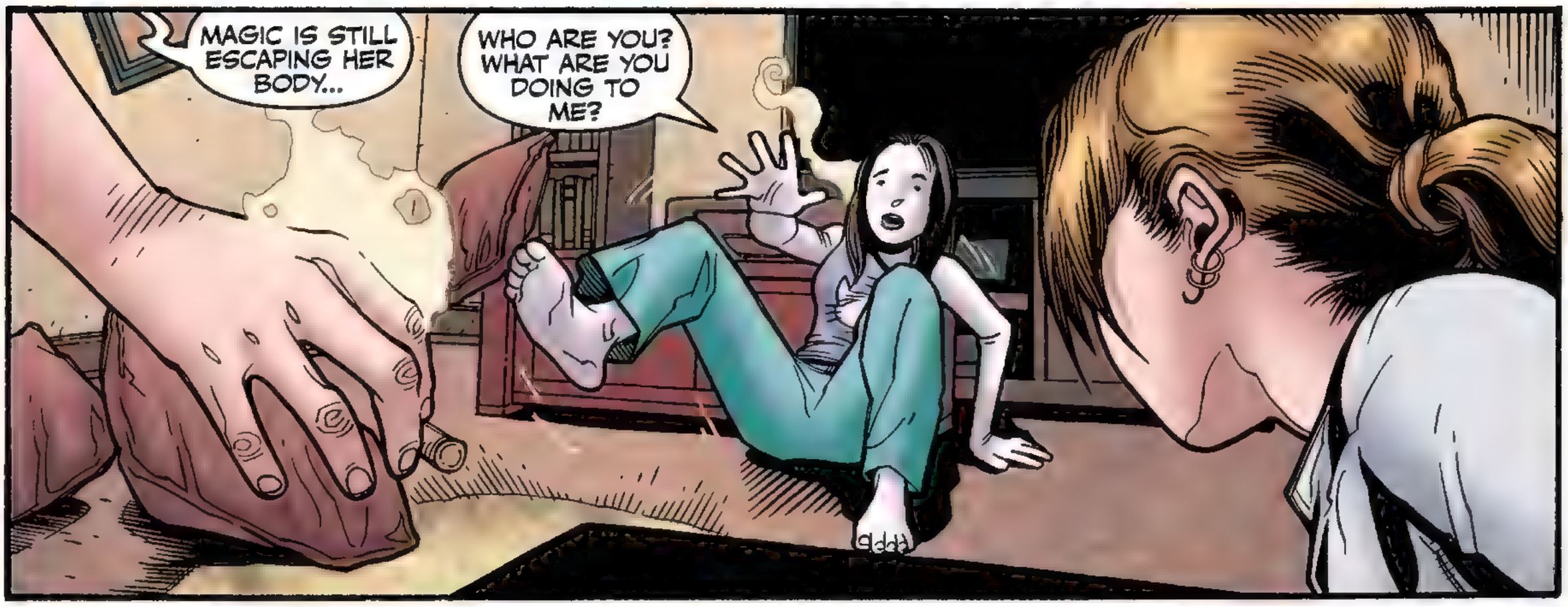
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR MAGIC?

=HHHUUUHH=

IT WORKED!
DAWN!
IT WORKED!

DAWNIE...
I'M SO SORRY.
WHAT'S GOING ON? WHERE AM I?
AND WHY WON'T BUFFY LET GO OF ME?


I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO LOSE YOU FOREVER.
WHY DO I FEEL SO... EMPTY...?
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?!


MAGIC IS STILL ESCAPING HER BODY...
WHO ARE YOU? WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ME?

YOU DON'T REMEMBER WILL?

IS SHE STILL DARK? DID SHE DO THIS TO ME?

IT'S ALL SO FUZZY...

BUFFY, I THINK I ONLY WOKE HER UP.

MAYBE MAGICKED HER AN EXTRA COUPLE OF DAYS.

SHE'S LOSING MEMORIES.

WHAT DOES THAT ***MEAN?!*** WHY IS EVERYONE TALKING LIKE I'M NOT IN THE ROOM?

BECAUSE PRETTY SOON YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BE.

NOT HELPING, XAN.

DO YOU REMEMBER ME? DO YOU REMEMBER ***US?***

I THINK...

WAS IT THE SPELL? IS THERE A ***DIFFERENT*** SPELL WE CAN USE?

I'M SORRY, BUFFY. THE SPELL WAS GOOD.

IT WAS ME. I JUST DON'T HAVE ENOUGH MAGIC IN ME.

WAIT. WE HAVE WILLOW. WHERE'S THE ***VAMPYR*** BOOK?

THE DEEPER WELL?

VAMP

THAT MUST BE THE PLACE SEVERIN AND SIMONE WANTED TO FIND.

THANKS FOR LUGGING THE BOOK OVER, GUYS.

I'M A FULL-SERVICE SLAYER. YOU WANT DONUTS? COFFEE? FRESHLY CARVED STAKES?

C'MON, LET'S LEAVE THE SLAYING TO THE PROFESSIONALS.

BUT AREN'T YOU GOING TO TELL HER THAT YOU'RE--

CHOSEN? DO YOU REALLY THINK IT'LL BOOST BUFFY'S CONFIDENCE TO KNOW THAT A BUNCH OF SLAYERS THOUGHT SHE NEEDED A BABYSITTER TO HOLD ONTO A CRAPTASTIC APARTMENT?

BUT WHAT ABOUT DOWLING? AND THE *VAMPIRE* SLAYER?

DOWLING'S FINE. AND THE LAST THING BUFFY NEEDS TO WORRY ABOUT IS A HYBRID VAMP.

SORRY, BILLY, BUT SOMETIMES HELPING IS KNOWING WHEN TO GET OUT OF THE WAY.

WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF THIS SOONER? GILES SHOWED ME THE ENTRANCE IN ENGLAND.

THE DEEPER WELL IS WHERE THE OLD ONES ARE ENTOMBED.

RIGHT IN JOLLY OLD, HUH?

AKIRA

THERE'S AN ENTRANCE IN ENGLAND, AND IN NEW ZEALAND. BOTH *HEAVILY* GUARDED.

"AND NO WONDER--THE DEEPER WELL'S A TOMB FOR THE OLD ONES--THE FIRST DEMONS TO WALK THE EARTH...

"...OR SLITHER, SCUTTLE, AND CRAWL THEIR WAY ACROSS IT...

"THEY WERE PURE EVIL AND KEPT THE EARTH IN A CONSTANT STATE OF CHAOS...

"...UNTIL MORTAL CREATURES ROSE UP AND BANISHED THEM.

"THE MOST POWERFUL--THOSE WHO COULDN'T BE DEFEATED BY DEATH--WERE ENTOMBED IN SARCOPHAGI.

"THEIR ESSENCES TRAPPED IN CRYSTALS EMBEDDED IN THE STONE.

"AND THE SARCOPHAGI WERE PLACED DEEP BENEATH THE EARTH. IN A CRYPT THAT STRETCHES FROM ONE SIDE OF THE PLANET TO THE OTHER..."

THAT'S A LOT OF DEAD DEMONS.

ILLYRIA USED TO BE AN OLD ONE.

BUT SHE AND KOH RAN OFF TO FIND THE COUNCIL.

SIDEBAR, BUFFY--

"--THE LAST OLD ONE TO BE BANISHED TO THE DEEPER WELL SIRED THE FIRST VAMPIRE."

NOTHING GOOD EVER HAPPENS WHEN WE GO UNDERGROUND.

SINCE WHEN ARE YOU SCARED OF A SHOWDOWN WITH A VAMPIRE?

IT'S NOT THAT. SOMETHING DOESN'T ADD UP. IF SEV CAN ZAP HIS WAY ANYWHERE, WHY DIDN'T HE JUST STEAL THE BOOK?

THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHERE YOU WERE HIDING IT. THEY FIGURED I WOULD.

MY POINT IS, WHY DO THEY EVEN NEED IT? SEVERIN DOESN'T NEED TO USE THE ENTRANCE. HE COULD JUST POOF HIMSELF INTO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH.

I THINK IT'S MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT.

THE DEEPER WELL WAS DESIGNED TO HOLD UNTOLD AMOUNTS OF MAGIC INSIDE.

IT ALSO WORKS IN REVERSE. WHAT GOOD WOULD A PRISON BE IF YOU COULD TELEPORT ANCIENT DEITIES IN AND OUT?

IF YOU WANT TO GET SOMETHING OUT OF THERE, YOU'D NEED TO BREAK IN THROUGH ONE OF THE ENTRANCES...

AND IF YOU ATTACK ONE ENTRANCE, THE GUARDS AT THE OTHER WOULD PROBABLY COME LEND A HAND...

HE'S RIGHT, BUFFY. BUT WITH THE BOOK, WE KNOW WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST.

OKAY. THEN LET'S GO GET YOU SOME MORE MAGIC, WILL.

YOU WANT TO *LEAVE* ME HERE?

YOU'LL BE SAFER.

ANDREW, BILLY, AND ANAHEED WILL MAKE SURE YOU HAVE EVERYTHING YOU NEED.

I LOVE YOU.

WHY DOES IT SOUND LIKE YOU'RE SAYING GOODBYE?

BECAUSE I AM. BUT THAT WAS JUST A TWENTY-FOUR-HOUR GOODBYE.

IF IT WERE FOR ANY LONGER, I'D PROBABLY HAVE ACCIDENTALLY BROKEN A COUPLE OF YOUR RIBS.

YOU'RE MY SISTER. I'M NOT GOING TO FAIL.

I KNOW. YOU ALWAYS FIND A WAY.

I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU THIS CONFIDENT SINCE...

...WELL, BEFORE YOU DESTROYED THE SEED.

WANT TO KNOW THE SECRET TO MY UNFLAPPABILITY?

IT'S SO DAWN DOESN'T WIG OUT.

UH-OH. ARE *YOU* GOING TO WIG OUT?

NO, BUT XANDER MIGHT. I'M JUST BEING CAREFUL. I WANT TO MAKE SURE WE'RE MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION THIS TIME.

EVEN THOUGH XANDER WAS WRONG ABOUT A LOT OF THE THINGS HE SAID, HE STILL HAD A POINT.

IF I HAD QUESTIONED WHAT WAS GOING ON WHEN TWILIGHT WAS RAMPING UP, MAYBE I WOULD HAVE DONE THINGS DIFFERENTLY.

WHAT IF WE GO INTO THE DEEPER WELL AND ACCIDENTALLY RELEASE A BUNCH OF CRANKY DEMONS WHO'VE BEEN LOCKED UP FOR MILLIONS OF YEARS?

WHAT DO YOU THINK THEY'D DO IN A WORLD *WITHOUT* MAGIC?

I SUPPOSE THAT WOULD QUALIFY AS AN APOCALYPSE.

WE SHOULD HAVE A STRICT "NO TOUCHING" RULE WHEN WE'RE DOWN THERE.

BUFFY, I KNOW PEOPLE WERE HARSH ON YOU AFTER YOU DESTROYED THE SEED.

"PEOPLE"?

"PEOPLE" INCLUDES ME.

BUT I WAS JUST BEING SHORT-SIGHTED.

FIGHTING TO GET MY MOJO BACK MADE ME REALIZE SOMETHING--I DON'T HAVE TO BE AFRAID OF MY POWER ANYMORE.

I MIGHT NOT HAVE LEARNED THAT IF YOU HADN'T MADE THE CHOICES YOU DID.

SOMETIMES THINGS HAVE TO GET WORSE BEFORE THEY GET BETTER.

IT JUST TOOK AN INTER-DIMENSIONAL WALK-ABOUT TO MAKE ME REALIZE THAT.

ARE WE AT THE BETTER PART YET?

NO, BUT THE WORLD'S ON ITS WAY, BUFFY.

STARTING WITH DAWN.

I CAN FEEL IT.

SOMETHING INSIDE ME TELLS ME THE DEEPER WELL'S EXACTLY WHERE WE NEED TO GO.

WHY DO YOU HAVE TO GO?

I CAN'T SIT ON THE SIDELINES CALLING THIS GAME. NOT WHEN YOUR LIFE IS ON THE LINE.

BUT, XANDER, EVERYTHING IN MY HEAD IS STARTING TO GET CLOUDY...

...AND IF YOU'RE NOT HERE WHEN IT'S COMPLETELY GONE...

BUFFY AND WILLOW CAN DO THIS WITHOUT YOU.

NO, DAWN, THEY CAN'T.

AND WHEN EVERYTHING'S BACK TO NORMAL, IT WILL BE BECAUSE OF WHAT I DID.

KENNEDY JUST CALLED. THE JET'S READY.

KENNEDY HAS A PRIVATE JET?

WHY DID I BREAK UP WITH HER AGAIN?

SHE'S KIND OF A MILLIONAIRE NOW.

THUNK

WHAT WAS THAT?

SO, UM, YOU DON'T ACTUALLY HAVE SLAYER STRENGTH?

NOT EXACTLY.

I DO.

WHERE IS SHE?

SPIKE?

YOU JUST MISSED BUFFY. SHE'S ON HER WAY TO THE DEEPER WELL.

DEEPER WELL, EH? TOO BAD DROGYN'S OUT OF A JOB. I COULDA HELPED HER GET IN.

BUT I AIN'T HERE TO PLAY PUPPY DOG TO THE SLAYER.

I'M HERE FOR LITTLE BIT.

DO I KNOW YOU?

BETTER THAN YOU THINK, LUV.

COTSWOLDS, ENGLAND.

THE ENTRANCE TO THE DEEPER WELL.

I STAYED WITH GILES SO CLOSE TO HERE... RIGHT AFTER...WELL, AFTER I WENT DARK.

WHY WOULD GILES BRING ME SO CLOSE TO SO MUCH POWER WHEN I WAS AT MY MOST DANGEROUS?

BECAUSE HE TRUSTED YOU, WILL.

THE ENTRANCE SHOULD BE DISGUISED AS A TREE WITH A HOLLOW IN IT.

AND, ACCORDING TO THIS, THERE SHOULD BE A GUARDIAN PROTECTING IT.

WAS THAT "A" GUARDIAN?

SHE MUST HAVE SAID TWENTY.

I SHOULD HAVE SAID FORTY.

SLAYER.

D'HOFFRYN, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

WHEN THE SEED WAS DESTROYED, THE GUARDIANS CEDED CONTROL OF THE WELL TO US.

AND AFTER ILLYRIA'S DEFEAT, WE GOT WORD THAT THE SIPHON WAS COMING HERE.

HE WON'T FIND *HERE* WITHOUT THIS.

WE JUST CAME TO GET ENOUGH MYSTICAL ENERGY TO KEEP MY SISTER ALIVE.

SO YOU'LL TOTALLY LET US BY? NO NEED TO CALL REINFORCEMENTS.

I'M SORRY, SLAYER, BUT OUR JOB IS TO PROTECT MAGIC...

...FROM *EVERYONE.*

BRING IT.

LAKE TAUPO, NEW ZEALAND.

HARRIS'S INTEL WAS SOLID. THAT'S THE OTHER ENTRANCE...

THE COTSWOLDS ENTRANCE IS BEING ATTACKED!

THE SIPHON?!

THERE ARE MORE ASSAILANTS THAN EXPECTED!

YOU OTHERS WILL GO FACE THEM.

I WILL STAY.

SUMMERS IS ATTACKING COTSWOLDS.

HARRIS IS TWO FOR TWO.

HE CAN REALLY THINK ON HIS FEET...

DIDN'T HURT THAT HE LET YOU BEAT HIM TO A PULP.

C'MON, LET'S MOVE. SO LONG AS THE COUNCIL'S BUSY WITH SUMMERS...

...WE CAN WALK RIGHT IN THE BACK DOOR.

THE SCYTHE.

ITS POWER. ITS STRENGTH. ITS NAME I CAN NEVER REMEMBER.

OH WELL.

DOESN'T MEAN I'VE FORGOTTEN HOW TO USE IT.

I HAVEN'T WIELDED THE SCYTHE SINCE I SHATTERED THE SEED.

BUT I GUESS THAT MAKES SENSE...

...I HAVEN'T TRIED TO DO SOMETHING THIS IMPOSSIBLE SINCE THEN.

THE CORE

PART TWO

LET ME BY.

NOT A CHANCE, SLAYER.

I NEED TO HELP MY SISTER.

YOU HAVE ALREADY DAMAGED THIS WORLD BEYOND REPAIR. YOU CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO ENTER THE DEEPER WELL.

HANG ON, BUFF--

BAM

--OOOF!

AND ZEN DEMONS AREN'T SUPPOSED TO BE DOWN WITH THE FIGHTY--

YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO HAVE POWER.

--BUT I WON'T TELL IF YOU WON'T.

IT'S TIMES LIKE THIS I REALLY MISS THAT ARMY I USED TO HAVE.

GONNA HAVE TO AGREE WITH YOU.

YOU TAKE THE DEMONS. I'LL TAKE EVERYTHING ELSE.

SPEAKING OF EVERYTHING ELSE...

WHERE'S XANDER?

C'MON...

Are you in yet?

LET US IN, LITTLE GIRL.

PLEASE GO. YOU'RE UPSETTING ME.

I'M SORRY. BUT ALL YOUR FRIENDS LEFT.

YOU SHOULD, TOO.

I CAN'T. I HAVE TO GUARD THE TREE.

CLICK

WHY WON'T YOU LEAVE ME ALONE?

POP!

YOU HEARD HER!

LEAVE HER ALONE!

PFT PFT PFT PFT PFT

YOU THINK THE COUNCIL WOULD LEAVE THE DEEPER WELL COMPLETELY UNDEFENDED?!

THEY PRACTICALLY DID.

C'MON. ACCORDING TO HARRIS, SUMMERS WON'T BE ABLE TO DISTRACT THE COUNCIL FOREVER.

TELL HIM TO BUY US MORE TIME.

BILLY-- CAN YOU HEAR ME?

I MADE CHOCOLATE CHUNK WITH EXTRA--

SHHH-- IMPORTANT SLAYER-WATCHER SKYPE IN PROGRESS!

YOU HAVE TO COME BACK TO SANTA ROSITA.

KATIE AND I HAVE OUR HANDS FULL.

OURS AREN'T EXACTLY EMPTY.

BUFFY'S SISTER IS DISAPPEARING, AND WE'RE TRYING TO HELP BY--

NO ONE WANTS A COOKIE?

YOU'RE EATING COOKIES?

THEY'RE EATING *PEOPLE.*

AND BILLY...

THEY DON'T NEED INVITATIONS TO GET IN.

I NEED TO GO HOME.

YOU NEED TO GO HOME.

WHAT ABOUT DAWN?

OPEN UP, NIBLET.

NO. GO AWAY!

CAN'T DO THAT, LUV.

LEAVE ME ALONE.

PLEASE...

I CAN'T SIT OUT THERE AND PRETEND I REMEMBER ANY OF YOU. 'CAUSE EVERY TIME I TRY, IT JUST REMINDS ME OF THE SCARIEST THING OF ALL...

I CAN'T REMEMBER WHO I AM.

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOU IS A WHOLE BIG LOT OF SCARY--BUT YOU NEED TO HANG ON UNTIL YOUR BIG SIS GETS BACK WITH ENOUGH MAGIC TO STOP YOUR DISAPPEARING ACT.

AND I'M GOING TO HELP YOU DO THAT.

YOU CAN MAKE IT STOP?

NO. BUT I CAN TAKE AWAY SOME OF THE SCARE.

HOW?

BY TELLING YOU A STORY. ABOUT A PERSON WHO CAN ALWAYS PULL ME OUT OF A FUNK.

WHO?

YOU.

CRACK

We need more time.

I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE GOING TO GET IT.

THOK

HEY-- WHY DON'T YOU PICK ON SOMEONE...

...MUCH, MUCH SMALLER THAN YOU.

BUFFY-- GO!

RETREAT, SLAYER.

I'LL DIE FIRST.

VERY WELL.

THWUMP

PUT ME DOWN!

UGHHH...

YOU GUYS ARE WAY TOO LITERAL.

SLAYER MUST DIE!

SWISH

D'HOFFRYN PUT OUT WORD THAT THE COTSWOLD PASSAGE WAS UNDER ATTACK.

WE DID NOT EXPECT THE ATTACKER WOULD BE *YOU.*

THE NIGHT'S FULL OF SURPRISES.

BUT YOU'RE NOT STOPPING ME FROM GETTING INSIDE THE WELL.

WE ARE ON YOUR SIDE, SLAYER.

YEAH--UNTIL D'HOFFRYN TELLS YOU HE CAN NAME NAMES IN YOUR QUEST FOR VENGEANCE.

YOU NEED OUR HELP. YOU CANNOT DO THIS ALONE.

WATCH ME.

DO YOU KNOW WHY I WAS IMPRISONED?

STILL WALKING AWAY.

MY FAMILY WAS KILLED AND I WAS BLAMED FOR THEIR DEATHS.

SORRY YOU GOT SHAWSHANKED, BUT IT DOESN'T CHANGE ANYTHING.

IT DOES, SLAYER. I HAVE FINALLY ACCEPTED A DIFFICULT TRUTH.

NO MATTER WHAT I DO...MY FAMILY WILL *NEVER* BE RETURNED TO ME.

YOUR SISTER CAN STILL BE RETURNED TO YOU.

IF YOU LET US HELP.

YOU GOT SICK OF EVERYONE CHATTERING BEHIND YOUR BACK SO YOU DECIDED TO FIND OUT WHAT THE BIG HUSH WAS ALL ABOUT. YOU SNUCK OUT OF THE HOUSE--QUITE SKILLFULLY I MIGHT ADD--BUT HAD THE UNFORTUNATE LUCK OF RUNNING INTO ME.

DIDN'T SEEM TO LIKE ME MUCH BACK THEN.

BUT THAT'S CHANGED.

WE BROKE INTO THE MAGIC BOX TOGETHER. YOU FOUND GILES'S DIARY AND THAT'S WHERE YOU LEARNED THE TRUTH.

THAT YOU WERE THE KEY.

WHICH IS HOW WE COME TO BE IN THIS MESS TODAY.

click

YOU *WERE* THERE WHEN I LEARNED I WAS THE KEY.

YOU REMEMBER?

NO. BUT IT JUST SEEMS...

RIGHT. LIKE SOME PART OF ME... DEEP DOWN... KNOWS IT'S TRUE.

I'VE BEEN WITH YOU SINCE THE BEGINNING, LI'L BIT. SINCE A BUNCH OF MONKS DECIDED TO SPELL YOU INTO EXISTENCE.

SO THAT'S WHY I'M NOT LEAVING YOU UNTIL THE SLAYER GETS BACK HERE.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER I FOUND OUT I WAS THE KEY?

FUNNY, YOU ASK--'CAUSE YOU GAVE EVERYONE A SCARE, AND THE SLAYER BLAMED ME FOR...

WHAT? WHAT HAPPENED?

WHAT IS IT?

NOTHING.

HANG ON, LI'L BIT.

WELLS!

GET ME A BLOODY TAPE RECORDER! AND GET IT NOW!

WHY?

I'M STARTING TO FORGET DAWN TOO.

"AND HOW ARE WE GOING TO SAVE SOMEONE WE CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER?"

IF YOU LET GO, I PROMISE I WON'T *SWING* IT AT YOU!

SKRAK

INCOMING!

THANKS.

YOU OKAY, WILL...?

NOTHING I CAN'T HANDLE.

THE COUNCIL CALLED IN REINFORCEMENTS TO SET UP A PERIMETER AROUND THE DEEPER WELL. A COUPLE LEVEL-THREE MYSTICS. HALF A DOZEN DEMONS I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE. AND I THINK A DEMI-GOD JUST SHOWED UP.

THEY'RE NOT THE ONLY ONES WITH REINFORCEMENTS.

WE HIT THEM FAST. WE HIT THEM HARD.

"AND WE DON'T STOP UNTIL WE'RE INSIDE."

BZZ BZZ BZZ

IT'S HARRIS.

WHY AREN'T WE BACK IN TIME? WHY AM I STILL STANDING IN THE PRESENT THAT I DON'T LIKE VERY MUCH AT ALL?

CHILL OUT, HARRIS. WHAT WE'RE DOING IS GOING TO TAKE TIME.

YOU NEED TO KEEP ALL THOSE MAGICAL BEINGS TOPSIDE BUSY JUST A LITTLE WHILE LONGER.

BUFFY CAN'T WIN THIS FIGHT.

SHE'S GOING TO GET HERSELF *KILLED.*

DON'T SWEAT IT, HARRIS. EVEN IF BUFFY GETS KILLED...

...WHEN SEVERIN TURNS BACK THE CLOCK, *NONE* OF THIS WILL HAVE HAPPENED.

THE *ONLY* REASON I SAID I'D HELP YOU WAS SO I *WOULDN'T* HAVE TO WATCH SOMEONE I LOVE *DIE!*

XANDER--

CLICK

click

REC
00:0

IF YOU'RE LISTENING TO THIS, IT MEANS YOU'RE A DOZY MUGGET WHO'S FORGOTTEN SOMEONE VERY IMPORTANT TO YOU...

SPIKE?

WE WERE HOPING YOU COULD GET A MESSAGE TO BUFFY.

DO I LOOK LIKE A BLOODY ANSWERING MACHINE?

GAP

NEVER MIND.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

WE TRIED CALLING BUFFY. BUT SHE WASN'T ANSWERING.

THAT'S 'CAUSE, WITH ANY LUCK, SHE'S ALREADY HALF A MILE UNDERGROUND.

SPILL IT. BUT MAKE IT QUICK. I'VE GOT THE SLAYER'S LITTLE SIS TO REMEMBER.

IN CASE YOU TALK TO HER BEFORE WE GET BACK, WILL YOU TELL HER SOMETHING ABOUT SIMONE DOFFLER FOR US?

I'LL ATTACK FROM THE FRONT. DRAW AS MUCH OF THE FIREPOWER AS POSSIBLE. KOH WILL COME FROM THE RIGHT FLANK. XANDER ON THE LEFT. WILLOW WILL COME IN FROM THEIR BLIND SPOT WITH ILLYRIA AND GET INTO THE DEEPER WELL.

IF I CAN GET FAR ENOUGH INSIDE, I SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET THE MAGIC I NEED TO KEEP DAWN ALIVE.

EVERYONE READY?

YES.

INDEED.

LET'S GO.

I CAN'T LET YOU DO THIS, BUFFY. THEY'VE GOT AN ARMY. WE'VE GOT ONE SLAYER, A WITCH WHO JUST GOT HER MOJO BACK, A WORF LOOK-ALIKE, A DEPOWERED GOD, AND...WELL, *ME.*

YOU'RE GONNA GET KILLED.

MAYBE.

BUT AT LEAST I'LL GET WILLOW INSIDE.

DON'T *DO* THIS.

YOU DON'T THINK I CAN?

IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU.

THEN LET *ME* SAVE DAWN.

BUT I ALREADY *HAVE!*

"ALREADY"?

WHAT DOES *THAT* MEAN?

WHEN I TOLD YOU I TURNED DOWN SEVERIN AND SIMONE... I *LIED.*

I TOLD THEM WHERE THE OTHER ENTRANCE TO THE WELL WAS.

YOU *WHAT?*

I DID IT TO SAVE YOUR *SISTER.*

YOU DID IT BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T BELIEVE IN *ME.* IN *ANY* OF US.

WE COULD HAVE GOTTEN THE MAGIC.

BUT TURNS OUT YOU'RE THE ONE WE SHOULDN'T HAVE BELIEVED IN.

WE MUST STOP THE SIPHON.

EVEN AS A GOD, I COULD NOT DO WHAT HE'S ATTEMPTING.

HE WILL TEAR THE UNIVERSE APART.

BUFFY--

DON'T.

WE HAD ONE MISSION, XANDER--SAVE DAWN. BUT THANKS TO YOU...

WE HAVE TO SAVE THE WORLD.

AGAIN.

THERE.

THE CORE

PART THREE

THAT'S WHERE I'LL BE ABLE TO TAKE *ALL* OF IT...

YOU SURE WE SHOULDN'T CLIMB DEEPER?

C'MON, CLARE-- WE CAN'T WASTE ANY MORE TIME.

"CLARE"? YOU'RE LOSING IT.

YOU'RE NOT WITH YOUR GIRLFRIEND *YET.*

RIGHT. SORRY-- IT'S JUST...ALL THIS POWER IS MAKING IT HARD TO THINK.

FOCUS. IF YOU CAN'T HANDLE THIS KIND OF POWER, YOU'LL *NEVER* GET BACK TO HER.

"AND I'LL NEVER GET THE MOJO I'M AFTER."

THE POWER WE NEED TO SAVE YOUR SISTER IS SOMEWHERE DOWN THERE...

I CAN FEEL IT.

WE MUST STOP THE SIPHON BEFORE HE GAINS ENOUGH POWER TO RIP THE UNIVERSE APART.

YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO START THE FIGHT WITHOUT ME.

THE ONLY REASON WE GRANTED YOU ENTRANCE TO THE WELL WAS SO YOU COULD HELP US DEFEAT THE SIPHON--

--WHO THREATENS TO DESTROY THE WORLD BECAUSE OF WHAT *YOUR* FRIEND DID.

IS *THIS* REALLY NECESSARY?

SORRY. MY SISTER COMES FIRST. I'LL HELP IF I CAN, BUT I'M SURE YOU'LL MANAGE WITHOUT ME.

MY SISTER WON'T.

WE WILL STOP YOU FROM REMOVING MAGIC FROM THIS PLACE.

BEFORE YOU STOP SEVERIN?

DIDN'T THINK SO.

SLAYER!

RIGHT BEHIND YOU, BUFF!

THE SLAYER IS RIGHT. WE CAN DEFEAT THE SIPHON WITHOUT HER.

IT'S ON HERE SOMEWHERE.

HSSSSSSS

AWW, COME ON!

I RECORDED EVERY SINGLE THING I COULD REMEMBER ABOUT...

...ABOUT HER!

SO WHY ISN'T A BLOODY WORD ON HERE?

THIS IS YOUR FAULT, WELLS! YOU GAVE ME A BUM RECORDER!

IT'S NOT HIS FAULT.

I'M DISAPPEARING.

YOU SURE TICKING OFF THE GUY WHO SICS VENGEANCE DEMONS ON PEOPLE WAS A GOOD IDEA?

THERE WASN'T TIME TO ARGUE.

NOT WHEN WE NEED TO FIND THE RIGHT STRAIN OF MAGIC TO SAVE...

WILLOW--CAN YOU REMEMBER MY SISTER'S NAME?

NEITHER CAN I.

RIGHT. LET'S *MOVE.*

IT'S A LONG WAY DOWN.

YOU THINK I WON'T SURVIVE THE JOURNEY BECAUSE I AM POWERLESS.

MOVE OUT!

PERHAPS YOU ARE RIGHT.

BUT I SPENT AN ETERNITY IN THIS TOMB. AND THE SIPHON POSSESSES *MY* POWER.

YOU WILL NEED ME.

MAYBE I SCREWED UP.

BUT THAT ARMY OF MISFIT DEMONS IS GOING TO NEED ALL THE HELP IT CAN GET DOWN THERE.

THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY *YOU* CAN HELP.

BY STAYING PUT.

NOW RELEASE YOUR ANGER, AND ACCEPT YOUR PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE.

AND WHAT ABOUT MY FIST?

WHERE IS *ITS* PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE?

RING RING

WHAT?!

CHEERS TO YOU, TOO, HARRIS.

WANKER

SPIKE? NOW'S *NOT* A GOOD TIME.

LIKE I NEED *YOU* TO TELL ME *THAT.*

I'M STARING AT THE SLAYER'S SISTER RIGHT NOW.

WHAT? YOU'RE WITH...

...

...HER?

LUCKY FOR YOU I AM.

'CAUSE I'M NOT SURE HOW MUCH LONGER *SHE'S* GOING TO BE HERE.

AND, XANDER, I STILL REMEMBER WHAT SHE MEANS TO YOU...

...SO I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT WANT TO SAY HELLO WHILE YOU STILL HAD SOMEONE TO SAY IT TO.

PUT HER ON.

THE COUNCIL. THEY'RE COMING.

I SENSE IT.

I CAN'T STOP.

NOT NOW.

YOU MUST PROTECT ME.

SIMONE?!

SIMONE?!

SORRY, SEV.

YOUR GIRLFRIEND'S GOING TO HAVE TO WAIT.

I'VE GOT MY OWN REUNION TO PLAN.

IF I CAN FIND HIM.

THROUGH HERE.

SO WHAT EXACTLY ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

I'LL KNOW WHEN I FIND IT.

UMM, WILL--

OH MY GODDESS!

THIS MEANS WE'RE ON THE RIGHT PATH.

THE RIGHT PATH TO... *WHAT?*

MAGIC.

ENOUGH TO SAVE...

...MY SISTER?

NO, BUFFY, I THINK THIS IS BIGGER THAN JUST YOUR SISTER.

I THINK THERE MIGHT BE ENOUGH MAGIC DOWN HERE FOR *EVERYONE.*

YOU MEAN LIKE...A NEW SEED?

I DON'T KNOW. BUT WHATEVER IT IS... IT WANTS ME TO GO *THIS* WAY.

WHO ARE YOU?

AND *WHY* DOES THE GUY WITH THE ACCENT WANT ME TO TALK TO YOU?

I'M XANDER.

I KNOW THAT NAME DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU RIGHT NOW.

BUT IT USED TO.

AND IT WILL AGAIN.

I'M SCARED, XANDER.

DON'T BE. BUFFY'S FIXING THIS AS WE SPEAK.

BUFFY-- SHE'S...

YOUR SISTER.

AND, LUCKY FOR YOU, SHE'S THE SLAYER.

WHICH MEANS NO ONE CAN STOP HER FROM GETTING WHAT YOU NEED RIGHT NOW.

THAT'S WHAT *HE* KEEPS TELLING ME.

HE SAYS I HAVE TO HOLD ON FOR BUFFY TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT.

BUT I CAN'T FIGHT IT OFF ANY LONGER.

NOT THE COUNCIL. NOT DOFFLER, SEVERIN...OR WHATEVER ELSE IS DOWN HERE.

I DON'T WANT TO DIE, XANDER.

YOU'RE *NOT* GOING TO DIE.

BUT YOU'RE ALL FORGETTING ME...

LISTEN-- EVEN IF BUFFY FORGETS, EVEN IF YOU VANISH FROM THAT LOFT, EVEN IF NO ONE REMEMBERS YOU EVER EXISTED--

--THERE'S ONE PLACE YOU *CAN'T* DISAPPEAR FROM.

HERE.

YOU'RE PART OF ME. AND AS LONG AS YOU'RE PART OF ME--

I WILL *NEVER* STOP FIGHTING FOR YOU.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?

SHE DOES, HARRIS. AND I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT. 'CAUSE SHE'S GOING TO NEED ALL THE FIGHT SHE CAN GET.

NO!

HARRIS!

WHAT NOW?

IF DOFFLER'S IN THAT WELL LIKE YOU SAY... THERE'S SOMETHING YOU NEED TO KNOW.

SIMONE?!

SIMONE'S *TURNING* SLAYERS.

INTO VAMPIRE-SLAYERS.

EMPHASIS ON THE HYPHEN.

SLAYPIRES?! AND YOU'RE JUST TELLING ME NOW?

YOU WANT TO TAKE YOUR ANGER OUT ON SOMEONE--

"--SAVE IT FOR DOFFLER AND WHATEVER ARMY SHE'S BUILDING DOWN THERE..."

BINGO.

WAKE UP.

YOU'VE GOTTA BE HUNGRY.

PLIP

ROADWAR

THE SIPHON?

NO. BUT I RECOGNIZE THAT SOUND...

ROOAAR!

WE *MUST* KEEP MOVING!

YOU HEAR THAT?

GOOD THING THE LIGHT WANTS US TO GO THIS WAY.

OOF!

YOU OKAY?

YEAH, SOMEONE JUST LEFT THEIR SARCOPHAGUS--

--OPEN.

I'VE SEEN THAT BEFORE.

MALOKER.

WHY DOES THAT SOUND LIKE A NAME GILES LECTURED ME ABOUT?

IT *WAS* A NAME GILES LECTURED YOU ABOUT.

ROOOAAR!

REMEMBER? MALOKER? HE'S AN OLD ONE.

LIKE ILLYRIA?

WORSE.

THE DEMON WHO *WAS* IN THAT SARCOPHAGUS SIRED THE FIRST VAMPIRES.

ROOOAAR

AND THE WONDER TWINS LET HIM OUT TO SLOW US DOWN.

NOT *US.* THE COUNCIL.

IF HE FIT IN THAT COFFIN, THEY CAN HANDLE HIM.

BUFFY-- WITH THE OLD ONES...I THINK IT'S MORE OF A JUST-ADD-WATER-AND-WATCH-IT-GROW SITUATION.

ROOOAAR

HE'S *WHY* VAMPIRES EXIST. HE'S *WHY* YOU'RE THE SLAYER.

HE'S *WHY* THAT SCYTHE WAS FORGED.

YOU HAVE TO HELP THEM.

I NEED TO SAVE MY SISTER.

I CAN HANDLE *THAT.*

JUST BECAUSE XANDER LET YOU DOWN DOESN'T MEAN I WILL.

YOU KNOW THAT.

YOU DON'T KNOW THAT?

WILLOW, YOU'RE ***GLOWING*** RED. AND WHEN YOU START TO CHANGE COLORS, IT'S USUALLY NOT A FASHION CHOICE...

THIS--IT ***ISN'T*** DARK MAGIC.

IT'S ***ME.***

IT'S ***ALWAYS*** BEEN ME.

IT'S NOT JUST THE MAGIC.

YOU LEFT, WILL. WHEN I NEEDED YOU MOST.

YOU DIDN'T EVEN SAY GOODBYE.

AT LEAST WHILE WE WERE STILL AWAKE...

I KNOW I LET YOU DOWN.

BUT I WON'T *THIS* TIME.

OKAY. I'M COUNTING ON YOU.

ROOOAR!

PLEASE DON'T LET *ME* DOWN.

ROAR!

DO NOT RETREAT!

YOU ALL WILL DIE!

AAHH!

WE HAVE TO REACH THE SIPHON.

WE'LL NEVER GET CLOSE.

WE MUST.

...SIMONE...

...SIMONE...

...SIMONE...

"THAT POWER WILL OVERWHELM HIM."

AHHHHH!

--CLARE?!

CRACK

MALOKER?

XANDER--!

BACK OFF.

HOW'D YOU TALK THE ZEN DEMON INTO LETTING YOU GO?

LET'S JUST SAY I'M GOING TO HAVE BAD KARMA FOR A WHILE.

I NEVER SHOULD HAVE TRUSTED SIMONE. BUT I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO MESSED UP. WE WOULDN'T BE HERE IF WE *ALL* HADN'T MADE MISTAKES.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

SIMONE'S BUILDING AN ARMY OF SLAYPIRES. THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW IN CASE SHE CALLS FOR BACKUP.

TESSA.

SHE WAS THE ZOMPIRE WHO ALMOST BROKE MY ARM.

I DON'T GET IT. IF SIMONE THINKS SEV'S GOING TO RESET THE CLOCK, WHY IS SHE TURNING HER SLAYER ARMY INTO ZOMPIRES ***NOW?***

GOOD QUESTION, BUFFY-- BUT MAYBE WE SHOULD FIGURE OUT WHY YOU'RE ***BLEEDING*** FIRST.

THAT'S NOT ***MY*** BLOOD.

SIMONE...

MALOKER WASN'T A DIVERSION.

MALO- *WHO?*

AND SIMONE'S NOT BUILDING AN *ARMY.*

I DON'T NEED ONE ANYMORE.

CRUNCH

otto

THE CORE

PART FOUR

WHAK!

I WAS CHOSEN.

NO ONE EVER ASKED ME IF I WANTED TO BE A SLAYER.

AHHH!

BUT THIS... THIS I CHOSE.

...BUFFY...

AND, SUMMERS--IT WAS THE *BEST* DECISION OF MY LIFE.

BINGO!

MAGIC DETECTOR SAYS I'M IN THE RIGHT PLACE.

SO WHERE'S ALL THE MAGIC THAT'S GONNA SAVE BUFFY'S LI'L SIS...?

HUH?

OH NO--

AAAAAAH!

AAAAAAHH!

...CLARE...

...HELP ME...

WE MUST WEAKEN THIS BEAST!

MALOKER IS THE *LEAST* OF OUR WORRIES.

EVEN IF WE DEFEAT THE OLD ONE--

--WE WILL NOT BE CLOSE ENOUGH TO STOP THE SIPHON.

I CAN GO.

THE SIPHON WILL TAKE WHATEVER SHRED OF MAGIC THAT'S STILL KEEPING YOU ALIVE.

YOU WILL *DIE.*

HE ALREADY HAS *MY* POWER.

AND I DO NOT THINK MAGIC IS WHAT'S KEEPING THIS VESSEL ALIVE ANYMORE.

GR...RR!

ILLYRIA--!

GET OFF!

BAM

I WOULD HAVE TURNED A LOT SOONER.

JUST TOOK ME TOO LONG TO FIND A VAMPIRE WHOSE BLOOD HAD MORE KICK THAN THAT WEAK SAUCE UPSTAIRS.

SEVERIN.

WE HAVE TO STOP SEVERIN. HE'LL DESTROY THE UNIVERSE.

THAT KID'S NOT GONNA DESTROY ANYTHING--

--OTHER THAN HIMSELF--

--AND HOPEFULLY WHAT'S LEFT OF THAT COUNCIL.

THAT'S JUST LIKE YOU, SUMMERS-- ALWAYS AFRAID THE WORLD'S GONNA END.

I GUESS I SHOULD *THANK* YOU. WITHOUT THAT BRAND OF PESSIMISM, YOU NEVER WOULD'VE DESTROYED THE SEED TO STOP TWILIGHT.

AND YOUR MAGIC-FREE WORLD CLEARED THE DECK FOR ME TO BE THE MOST POWERFUL BEING AROUND.

WAK

THWAK

YOU *USED* ME.

YOU SAID WE COULD UNDO *ALL* THIS.

DID YOU REALLY THINK I WAS GOING TO SAVE...

...WHO WAS IT?

YOU CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER WHO YOU CAME DOWN HERE TO SAVE, CAN YOU?

CRACK

YES. I. CAN.

NOT FOR LONG.

XANDER!

YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE.

...DAWN...

...HER NAME IS DAWN...

YOU'RE DUST.

...TALK ABOUT HEARTBURN...

OH MY GODDESS.

IT'S A... SEED.

YOU DIDN'T BRING ME DOWN HERE TO *FIND* A NEW SEED...

YOU BROUGHT ME DOWN HERE TO GIVE *BIRTH* TO ONE.

SO...

...WHY CAN'T I MAKE WITH THE MAGIC?

YOU NEED TO BE PLUGGED IN OR SOMETHING?

YOU HAVE SAVED THIS WORLD. THERE *WILL* BE MAGIC. BUT IT WILL COME IN TIME.

WAIT, WHAT? HOW *MUCH* TIME?

MILLENNIA.

WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME THAT BEFORE?

BUFFY'S SISTER DOESN'T *HAVE*... MILLENNIA.

SHE'S GOING TO DIE BECAUSE I MESSED UP.

UNLESS...

YOU SURE SHE'S STILL HERE? SHE DIDN'T EVAPORATE?

I HOPE SO. I BLOODY HOPE SO.

GRRR!

AAAHHHHH!

AGH!

I WILL SLICE YOU FROM THE *INSIDE.*

SWAP

BAM

BAM

BAM

BAM

MY GRATITUDE.

YOU MUST FIGHT ALONGSIDE US.

UMM, I THINK I'M BETTER AT FALLING...

YOU CAN'T WIN.

I DON'T NEED TO WIN.

I JUST NEED TO KEEP YOU BUSY WHILE MY FRIENDS DO THE WINNING FOR ME.

DON'T THINK SO.

NOW I'M FINALLY GOING TO DO WHAT I'VE WANTED EVER SINCE I FIRST HEARD THE WORD *SLAYER.*

KILL BUFFY SUMMERS!

MAKE IT STOP...MAKE IT STOP...

I CAN HELP.

YOU MUST LISTEN TO ME.

CLARE?

DID IT WORK?

ARE WE BACK?

THERE IS NO GOING BACK.

IF YOU ATTEMPT TO REVERSE THE FLOW OF TIME, YOU WILL RIP APART THE FABRIC OF THE UNIVERSE.

BUT CLARE...

IS GONE.

AND YOU CANNOT CONTAIN THIS POWER MUCH LONGER. NOW FOCUS.

OR YOU WILL KILL US *ALL.*

I CAN'T--

I'VE GOT AN IDEA TO HELP BOTH OF US.

GOT ANY JUMPER CABLES?

YOU CAN'T STOP ME.

YOU'LL DIE DOWN THERE WITH THE REST OF THEM WHEN SEVERIN GOES ATOMIC.

MAYBE.

KRAK

--BUT I'LL TAKE *YOU* WITH ME!

CRASH

CRASH

CRASH

CRASH

...EHHHHH...

WHY WON'T YOU JUST GIVE UP?

...I'M A SLAYER...

...AND YOU'RE A VAMPIRE...

THWAK

FORGET IT, SUMMERS.

A SEED?

MORE LIKE SEEDLING. BUT IT NEEDS HELP TO MAKE IT TAKE HOLD NOW.

SEV'S BEEN COLLECTING MYSTICAL MOJO FOR MONTHS.

TRANSFERRING THE ENERGY WILL KILL HIM.

LOOK AT HIM-- HE'S GONNA *BLOW.* IF WE DON'T PUT ALL THAT POWER SOMEWHERE, HE'LL KILL ALL OF US.

NO--

I CAN GO *BACK!* I *HAVE* TO GO BACK!

STOP CLARE FROM TURNING...

EVEN AT THE HEIGHT OF MY POWER, I WAS UNABLE TO ALTER THE PAST.

...I HAVE MORE POWER THAN YOU EVER DID...

YOU STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT POWER IS.

YOU MUST LISTEN--YOU ARE NOT THE FIRST MAN TO DESIRE NOTHING MORE THAN TO SAVE THE WOMAN HE LOVED.

I HAD A... FRIEND.

HE LOST SOMEONE IMPORTANT TO HIM. HE BECAME OBSESSED WITH FINDING A WAY TO RETURN HER.

HE WOULD HAVE DONE ANYTHING.

DID HE SAVE HER?

NO.

AND HE WAS ONLY AT PEACE WHEN HE FINALLY LET HER GO.

BUT...

...HOW DID HE LIVE WITHOUT HER?

HE *DIDN'T*...

"HE DIED."

BUT HE DIED TRYING TO *SAVE* THE WORLD. NOT DESTROY IT.

YOU CAN'T BRING CLARE BACK. BUT YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO RESTORE MAGIC TO THIS REALM.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?

I WILL STAY. I WILL HELP YOU THROUGH IT.

NO. I'LL STAY--

THE SEED IS MY RESPONSIBILITY.

YOU MUST GO.

IF YOU ARE RIGHT--IF SEVERIN ACCELERATES THE SEED-- YOUR POWER WILL RETURN. YOU CAN SAVE THE SLAYER'S SISTER.

YOU MUST LIVE.

GOTTA SAY--NOT WHAT I EXPECTED FROM SOMEONE WITH THE LAST NAME "THE MERCILESS."

IT IS NOT WHAT I EXPECTED EITHER.

NOW GO.

GRRR!

XANDER!

HOW 'BOUT A LITTLE *HOCUS-POCUS*, WILL!

SORRY-- KIND OF LEFT IT DOWN THERE!

WE NEED TO GET TO THE SURFACE BEFORE THIS ELEVATOR SHAFT BECOMES MAGICAL CHERNOBYL!

NO ONE'S GOING ANYWHERE.

START CLIMBING.

I WILL OCCUPY THE BEAST.

NHH...

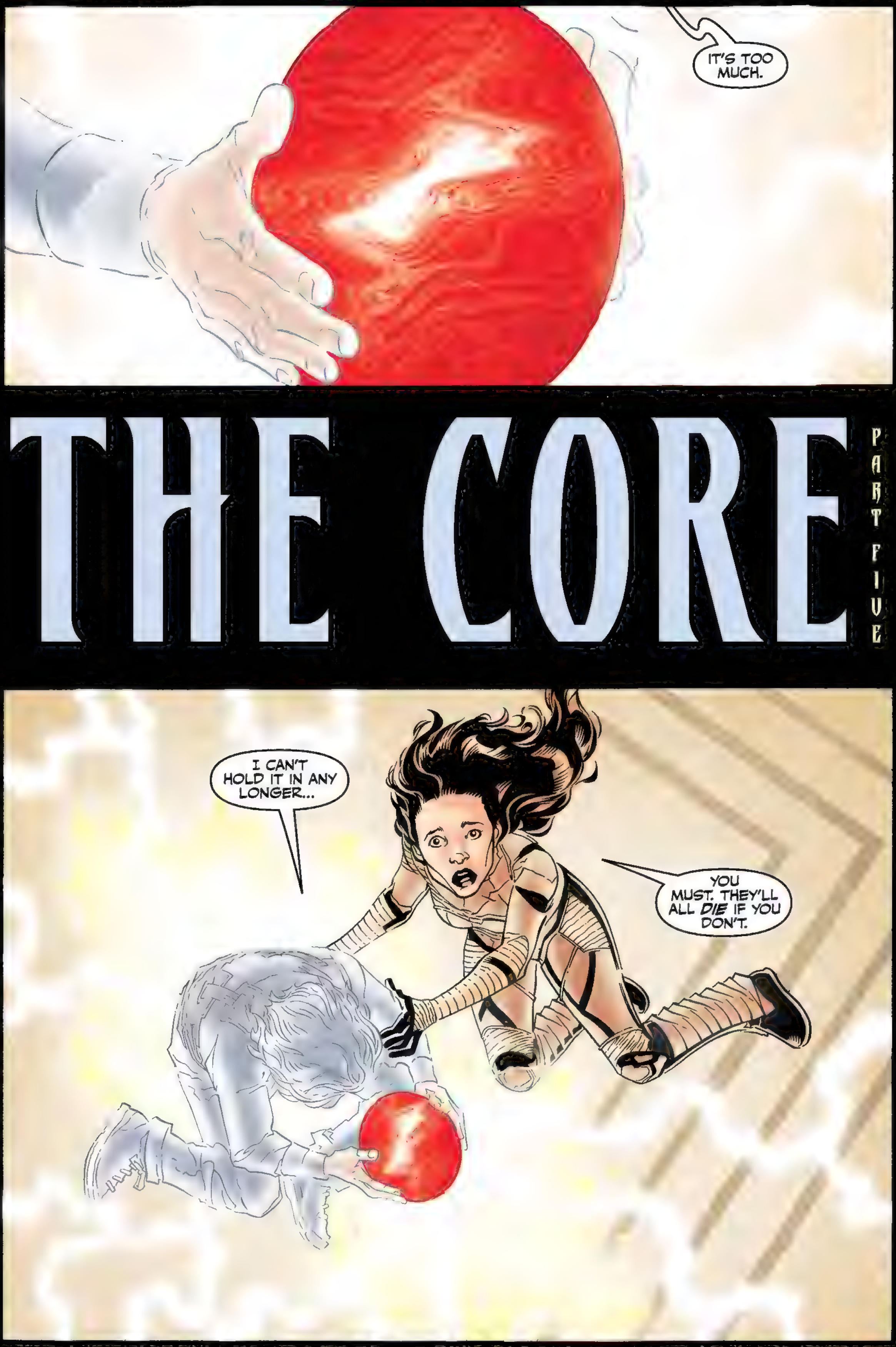
I CAN'T HOLD THE POWER IN ANY LONGER.

YOU MUST.

BUFFY?!

"YOU MUST GIVE THEM TIME TO ESCAPE."

WHO'S NEXT?


IT'S TOO MUCH.
THE CORE
PART FIVE
I CAN'T HOLD IT IN ANY LONGER...
YOU MUST. THEY'LL ALL *DIE* IF YOU DON'T.

LOOKS LIKE LITTLE BOY BLUE'S HIT HIS LIMIT.

WHICH MEANS IT'S TIME FOR MY EXIT.

YOU'RE *DEAD*, SIMONE!

WHAT SHE SAID, VAMP FACE!

DON'T THINK SO.

YOU'RE THE ONES WHO ARE GONNA DIE IN THIS HELL-HOLE.

HAVE FUN WITH MALOKER.

YOU HURT THE SLAYER.

AND MADE YOURSELF AN ABERRATION.

YOU BACKED THE WRONG SLAYER.

NO!

A CREATURE LIKE YOU CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO SURVIVE--

I'M SORRY...

DON'T BE, BUFFY.

THE NEW SEED'S GOING LIVE ANY SECOND.

AS LONG AS YOUR SISTER'S MAGIC DOESN'T COMPLETELY EVAPORATE BEFORE SEV GOES KABOOM--SHE STILL HAS A CHANCE.

TOO BAD THE KABOOM'S GOING TO TAKE *US* WITH IT...

BAM

NO--YOU CAME DOWN HERE TO SAVE MY SISTER.

I'M GETTING YOU OUT.

YOU HAVE A HOLE IN YOUR CHEST.

IT'S NOT THAT BAD.

OW!

'KAY. IT'S WORSE.

SLAYER BLOOD.

...DEMON BREATH.

WOOSH

SLAYER--BUFFY--AWAKE! WE MUST DEFEAT THIS CREATURE BEFORE THE SIPHON EXPLODES.

THEY'RE ALL YOURS, MALOKER.

SUMMERS WILL DIE DOWN HERE FIGHTING FOR HER FRIENDS.

ALL RIGHT, KOH--READY TO CLEAR A PATH AND TAKE THIS BLOOD-SUCKER OUT?

I WILL FIGHT ALONGSIDE YOU TILL MY DEATH.

GRRR!

LET'S HOPE IT DOESN'T GO THAT FAR.

WE'LL *NEVER* CLIMB OUT OF THIS HOLE FAST ENOUGH.

YOU SURE YOU CAN'T FLY US OUT?

I CAN'T EVEN *IF* BUFFY KILLS MALOKER. WE'LL NEVER GET OUT BEFORE SEV GOES NUCLEAR.

I SHOULD NOT HAVE ALLOWED ANYONE IN THIS TOMB...

WHERE'S THAT GANDALF WANNABE WHO FLOATED THE COUNCIL DOWN HERE?

HE'S *INSIDE* THE BEAST. JUST LIKE THE *REST* OF THE COUNCIL!

MAYBE *HE'S* MALOKER FOOD --

-- BUT HIS STAFF *ISN'T.*

KEEP THE GIANT BAT BUSY, XANDER!

THAT'S WHAT I'M DOING?!

GRRRR!

YOU WILL NOT WIN.

AAH!

A LITTLE HELP, XANDER?!

I'M TRYING!

HA. I FINALLY KILLED SUMMERS...

CRACK

AAAAH...

NO!

SWISH

ROOOAAAR!

HANG ON, SLAYER.

WE NEED THAT STAFF!

ROOOAAAR!

ALMOST THERE.

THIS IS ALL MY FAULT...

NO-- WE ALL CHOSE TO BE HERE.

THE WELL WILL COLLAPSE ON US ALL.

ROOOAAR!

HURRY, WITCH!

GOT IT! BUCKLE YOUR SEAT BELTS!

ILLYRIA-- WE CANNOT ABANDON HER!

SHE WANTED TO STAY WITH SEV! TO MAKE SURE HE CHANNELS THE ENERGY INTO THE SEED WHEN HE LETS LOOSE!

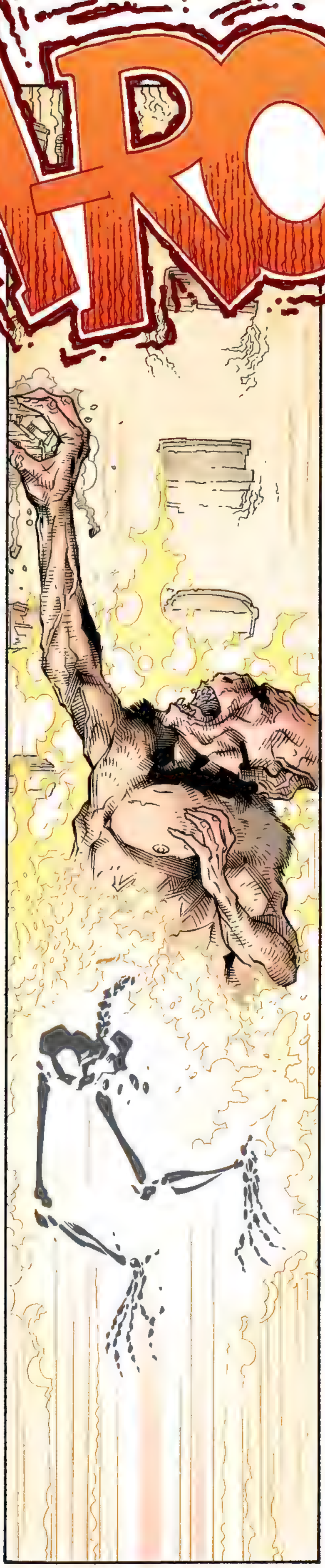
I CAN'T HOLD IT IN ANY LONGER--

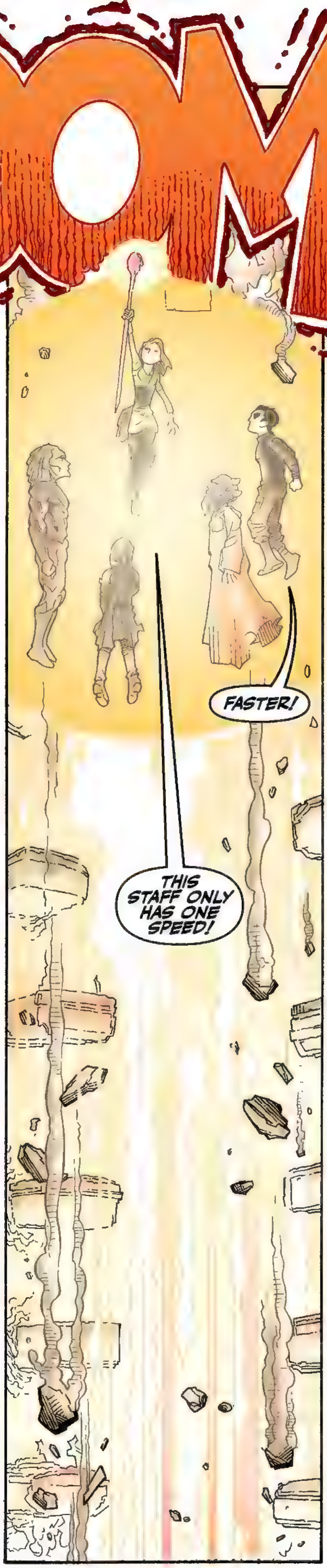
I'M SORRY, ILLYRIA.

DON'T BE.

YOU ARE GIVING THIS REALM SOMETHING IT DESPERATELY NEEDS.

SKA-BOOM





OF COURSE.

OH NO-- YOU'RE NOT LEAVING--

POP

NO! BUFFY!

DOFFLER!

DON'T STOP, WILL--

RUMBLE RUMBLE

IF I'M GOING TO DIE DOWN HERE--

--SO ARE YOU!

CHOP

AH!

NO. I LET YOU STEAL MY SLAYERS.

I LET YOU TWIST WHAT WE WERE ALL ABOUT. I LET YOU TERRORIZE TOO MANY PEOPLE.

BUT NOW... NOW YOU'VE TURNED YOURSELF INTO EVERYTHING I'M NOT. AND I'M GOING TO STOP YOU.

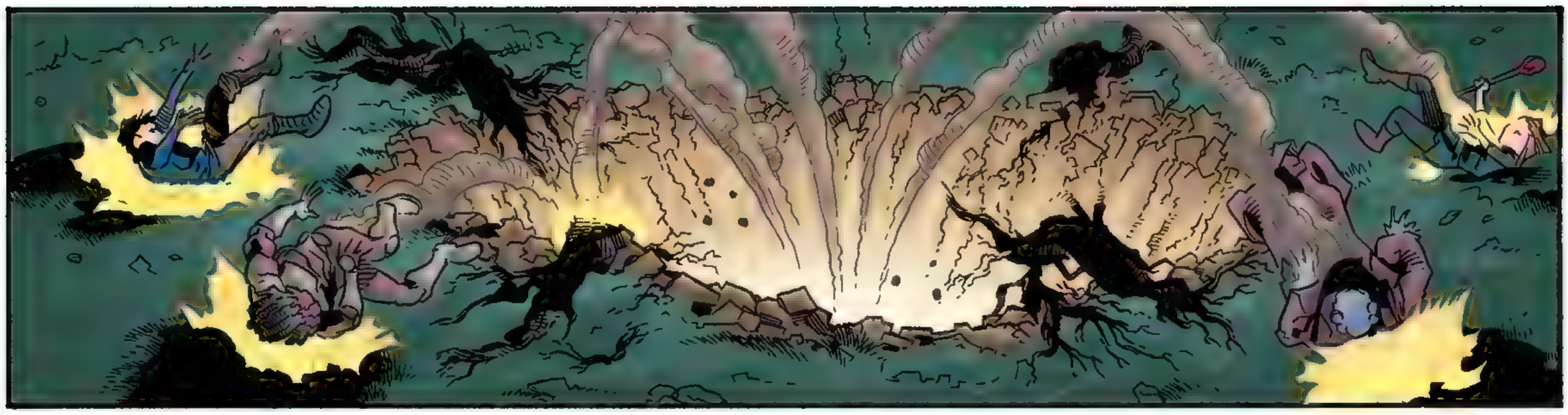
GOOD LUCK. THE SCYTHE IS MINE.

NO.

IT'S MINE.

AND I'M SORRY I EVER USED IT TO MAKE *YOU* A SLAYER.

PFT



OW-OW-OW...
WE MADE IT.
NO...WE DIDN'T.

BUFFY WAS DOWN THERE.
IF ANYONE COULD HAVE SURVIVED THAT, IT'S THE SLAYER.

UMMM, GUYS...

SIMONE...

STAND DOWN.

DOFFLER'S DUST.

WAS THAT...?

YES. *MAGIC.* IT'S BACK.

"SEVERIN AND ILLYRIA DID IT.

"THEY GAVE THE SEED THE POWER IT NEEDED TO TAKE ROOT.

"THEY GAVE UP THEIR LIVES SO THAT WE COULD HAVE MAGIC..."

SO LET'S MAKE SURE THEIR SACRIFICE ISN'T IN VAIN. WE HAVE TO GET TO SAN FRANCISCO.

WE'VE GOT TO SAVE MY SISTER.

DILIGENTIA EVASIT REVERTETUR AD SOLIDUM STATU...

WHERE *IS* SHE, WILL?

WHAT'S TAKING SO LONG?

I DUNNO. SOMETHING'S MISSING...

YEAH. DAWN.

I DON'T GET IT! DAWN'S ESSENCE IS STILL HERE! I CAN FEEL IT!

THEN WHERE'S THE BLOODY *MAGIC?*

BLOODY MAGIC?

SPIKE, YOU'RE A GENIUS!

I WON'T ARGUE WITH YOU, RED... BUT WHAT EXACTLY DID I SAY?

RIGHT NOW WHAT'S LEFT OF DAWN IS JUST MYSTICAL ENERGY.

THAT ENERGY NEEDS SOMETHING PHYSICAL TO COALESCE AROUND.

YOUR BLOOD.

DAWN WAS MADE FROM YOUR BLOOD ONCE BEFORE, BUFFY.

IT'S WHAT'S GOING TO GIVE HER LIFE AGAIN.

DILIGENTIA EVASIT REVERTETUR AD SOLIDUM STATU!

DON'T STOP! WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T STOP...

MYSTICUM POTENTIA REDISSET!

IT'S WORKING, WILL.

I'M TRYING BUT...

MYSTICUM POTENTIA REDISSET!

...SOMETHING FEELS DIFFERENT NOW.

VULTUX CRUOX!

COME ON, DAWN!

COME BACK TO US!

BAMF!

WHERE IS SHE?!

I DON'T UNDERSTAND. THE SPELL IS FROM THE ORDER OF DAGON'S SCROLLS. IT SHOULD HAVE WORKED.

IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.

WE WERE JUST...TOO LATE.

TOO LATE FOR WHAT?

WHY'S EVERYONE STARING AT ME?

I'M NOT A GIANT, AM I?

DAWN?!

YOU'RE BACK!

THANK GODDESS!

WHAT...WHAT HAPPENED?

EVERYTHING'S SO FOGGY...

THAT'S OKAY. AS LONG AS *YOU'RE* NOT FOGGY.

OH, DAWNIE, I THOUGHT I'D LOST YOU FOREVER.

YOU GAVE US QUITE THE SCARE WITH YOUR LITTLE DISAPPEARING ACT.

THAT'S RIGHT. I WAS DISAPPEARING.

I'M *THE KEY*...

BUT EVEN THEN I KEPT FADING...

SORRY WE WENT DOWN TO THE WIRE WITH THE RESCUE.

TURNS OUT RESTORING MAGIC TO AN ENTIRE REALM'S A LOT HARDER THAN I THOUGHT.

WELCOME BACK, LI'L BIT.

SPIKE...YOU STAYED WITH ME THE WHOLE TIME.

I'M SORRY I DIDN'T REMEMBER WHO YOU WERE.

I STAYED TOO!

SHE'S RIGHT, SPIKE. THANKS FOR HOPPING THE FIRST BUG SHIP BACK TO SAN FRAN.

AFRAID THE BUG SHIP'S BEEN SCUTTLED, LUV. YOU'VE MISSED OUT ON A LOT.

AND YOU CAN SAVE THE THANKS. DAWN--SAFE, SOUND, AND BACK IN HER BODY--IS ALL I NEED.

YOU DID IT, XANDER.

YOU SAVED ME.

ME? I DIDN'T REALLY DO ANYTHING.

WILLOW, BUFFY, KOH, EVEN D'HOFFRYN... REMEMBER HIM?-- THEY'RE THE ONES WHO SAVED YOU--

AND *ILLYRIA*-- SHE DIED MAKING SURE MAGIC WAS RETURNED TO THIS WORLD!

ME? I JUST WATCHED...

THAT'S NOT TRUE. WHEN I WAS JUST FADING ENERGY...WHEN I WAS ALMOST GONE...WHEN I COULDN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING, I HELD ON BECAUSE OF WHAT *YOU* SAID TO ME ON THE PHONE.

THAT I'D NEVER DISAPPEAR FROM YOUR HEART.

DAWN...?

WAIT...DAWN-- HOW DO YOU KNOW...?

KNOW WHAT...?

I'VE GOT THIS.

XANDER--

C'MON. I BETTER GIVE YOU A MAGICAL CHECK-UP JUST TO MAKE SURE I PUT YOUR SPLEEN... WHEREVER YOUR SPLEEN'S SUPPOSED TO GO.

SHE KNOWS I HELPED SEVERIN AND SIMONE.

HOW COULD SHE? UP UNTIL FIVE MINUTES AGO, SHE WAS A CLOUD OF MYSTICAL ENERGY.

I DON'T KNOW. BUT YOU DIDN'T FEEL THE WAY SHE KISSED ME. SOMETHING'S DIFFERENT.

SHE KNOWS I BETRAYED YOU GUYS.

YOU SURE THAT SOMETHING'S NOT IN *YOUR* HEAD? DAWN'S GOING TO UNDERSTAND.

I BETRAYED YOU, BUFFY.

I TEAMED UP WITH *SIMONE DOFFLER*... UNWITTINGLY HELPED HER BECOME A SLAYPIRE...AND ALMOST GOT YOU AND WILLOW KILLED IN THE PROCESS.

XANDER-- *WE WON.*

DAWN'S ALIVE.

AND IF YOU HADN'T HELPED SEVERIN AND SIMONE HIJACK OUR JOURNEY INTO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH, THE NEW SEED WOULD STILL BE RUNNING ON STANDBY FOR ANOTHER THOUSAND YEARS.

WITHOUT YOU, SHE WOULDN'T BE HERE.

YOU GAVE ME MY SISTER BACK.

YOU'RE REALLY FORGIVING ME?

AND SO WILL DAWN.

BUT *YOU* HAVE TO FORGIVE YOURSELF FIRST.

DO YOU STILL HAVE THE BOOK?
YEAH-- WHY?
WE PLANTED A *NEW* SEED, WILLOW. SUPERCHARGED WITH MAGIC STOLEN FROM EVERY DEMON SEVERIN COULD LAY HIS HANDS ON.
I CAN'T AFFORD ANOTHER TWILIGHT RERUN.
WE NEED TO FIGURE OUT *EXACTLY* WHAT THIS MEANS. FOR *EVERYONE.*
VAMPYR
WHAT'S WRONG? WHAT HAPPENED?
CAN IT WAIT TILL TOMORROW? I THINK WE SHOULD AT LEAST GET TWENTY-FOUR HOURS TOGETHER BEFORE I COMPLICATE THINGS.
YOU WERE RIGHT. REALLY SHOULD HAVE SPENT MORE TIME WITH THE BOOK WHEN I COULD.
WHY? WHAT'S WRONG?
IT'S BLANK.
WHAT DID WE *DO* DOWN THERE, WILL?

ZOMPIRE NEST.

SANTA ROSITA, CALIFORNIA.

CUMBER

MAL

GASP!

WHAT...

WHERE AM I?

YOU TURNED ME?!

GAK!

GRRRRR!

NO!

PUFT

AAAH!

HUH.

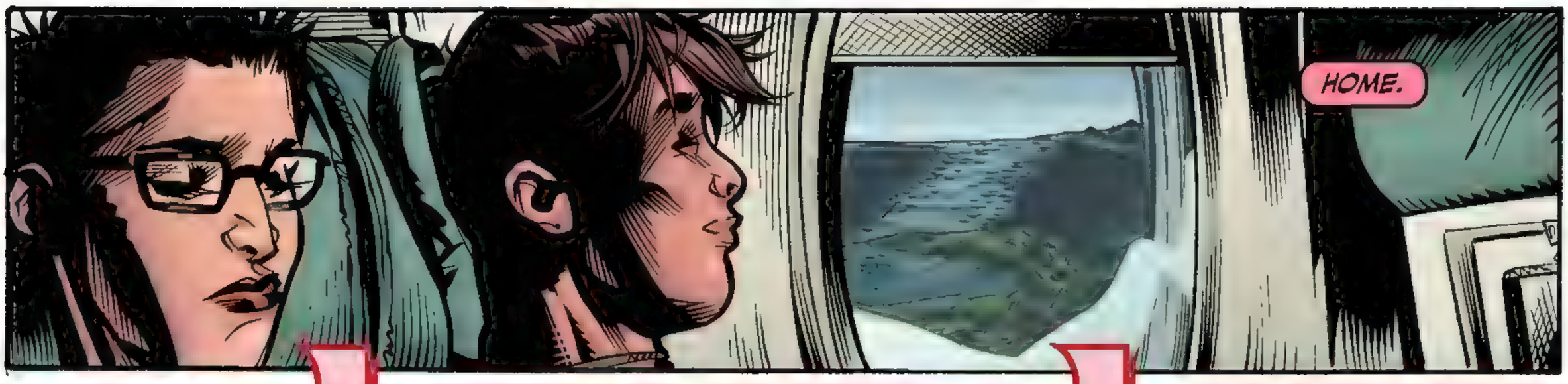
WARM.

YOU LIKE THAT, YOU SLOBBERING VAMP-ANDERTHALS?

'CAUSE I'M FULL OF SURPRISES.

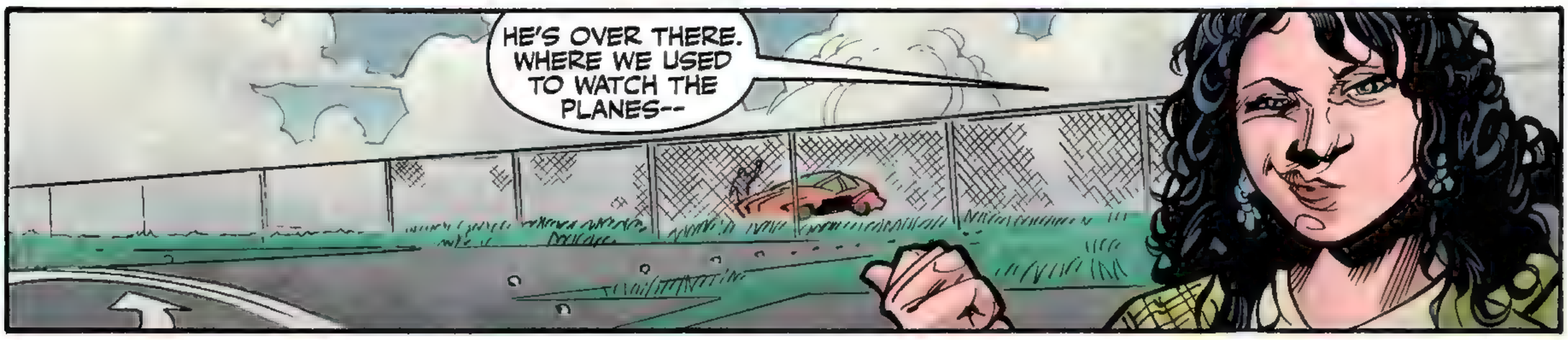
POOF

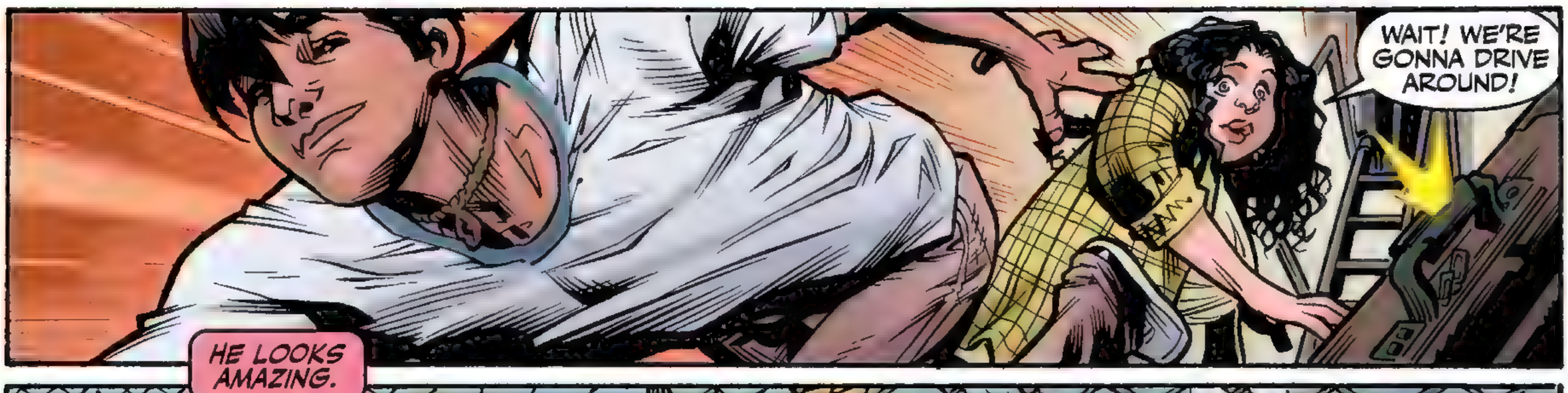
KREESH

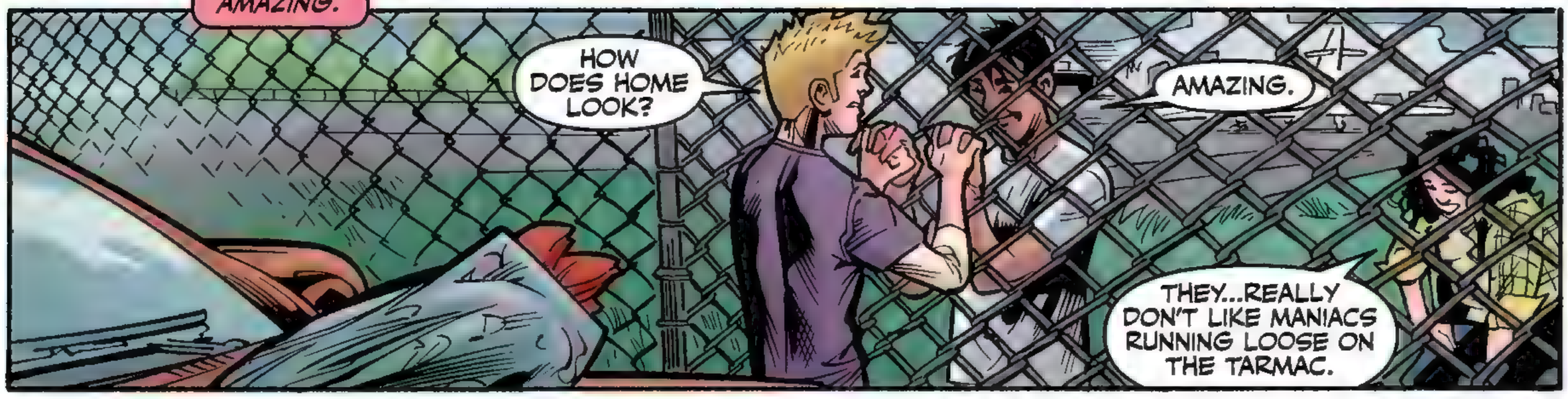

HOME.

LOVE vs. LIFE

I WAS AFRAID THEY'D MAKE YOU CUT YOUR HAIR.
IT LOOKS GOOD.
WHY ISN'T HE HERE? HE ISN'T HERE. WHY ISN'T HE HERE?
THANKS...


HE'S OVER THERE. WHERE WE USED TO WATCH THE PLANES--


WAIT! WE'RE GONNA DRIVE AROUND!
HE LOOKS AMAZING.


HOW DOES HOME LOOK?
AMAZING.
THEY...REALLY DON'T LIKE MANIACS RUNNING LOOSE ON THE TARMAC.

HOT RIDE!
SUBTLE!
IT'S A SKY BECAUSE MY NAME IS SKY.
THANKS FOR COMING TO SANTA ROSITA, ANAHEED. WE CAN USE THE HELP.
DEVON? HOW BAD IS IT?
THE ZOMPS ARE RUNNING OUT OF PUBLIC PLACES, SO THEY'RE GETTING BOLD AND TAKING OVER HOUSES. SWEEPING ACROSS TOWN FROM WHERE THE INFESTATION STARTED.
PERFECT. HE'S PERFECT. I LIKE PERFECT.
I DON'T KNOW WHY IT'S WORSE HERE THAN ANYWHERE ELSE, BUT IT IS. AND THE NO-INVITATION-NEEDED THING IS *SUCKING* IN A MAJORLY PANDEMIC WAY.
WE'VE BEEN MAKING STAKES AND STUFF FOR YOU. FIGURED YOU'D NEED THEM FOR THE BIG EVICTION.
NO, SORRY, BUT YOU DON'T NEED AN EVICTION. YOU NEED AN IMMUNIZATION. YOU NEED TO KEEP THEM OUT OF EVERYWHERE THEY AREN'T YET.
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE HOUSES THEY ALREADY TOOK?
SOMETIMES A SLAYER HAS TO WRITE OFF WHAT THEY CAN'T SAVE.
SAVE
WE'RE AT DEVON'S HOUSE?
ACCORDING TO HOW THEY'VE BEEN MOVING, THIS STREET'S GONNA FALL TONIGHT OR TOMORROW. LAST CHANCE TO GET STUFF OUT.
YOU TWO GO ON IN.
TAKE YOUR TIME...

I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE LETTING THEM, LIKE, STAGGER IN AND TAKE YOUR HOUSE.

YOU AND MY DAD. TOOK FOREVER FOR ME TO CONVINCE HIM NOT TO MAKE A LAST STAND.

FRAGILE

WE WERE USING MY ROOM TO STORE STUFF UNTIL WE REALIZED THIS LOCATION WOULDN'T HOLD. SKY AND KATIE MADE THOSE FOR YOU.

DOOZ IT

KATIE HATES TO PRACTICE VIOLIN.

OH, AND THERE'S THIS...

WHAT THE TIM GUNN?

YOU PUT THE STAKES THROUGH THE LOOPS. GRAB AND STAB.

SKY MADE IT?

UM... I MADE IT. I WANT YOU AS SAFE AS YOU CAN BE. PUT IT ON.

TAKING OFF A SHIRT SOUNDS EASY. DONE IT SINCE I WAS A KID. BUT SUDDENLY IT'S ALL COMPLICATED AND THE ROOM IS TOO WARM---

JUST

KKKKKKKKK

RACCOONS?

KRAK

BIG RACCOONS.

IT'S ONLY JUST NOW DUSK. I DON'T THINK THEY'D--

KSH

AAAHHHH!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

PULLING!

PAFF

GET OUT, DEVON! I'VE GOT SOME DUSTING TO DO!

I'M NOT GOING. WE CAN FIGHT TOGETHER. SLAYER AND WATCHER!

AND THEN SUDDENLY THERE IS THIS MEMORY...

A SLAYER AND A WATCHER?

WE WERE ON PATROL IN GOLDEN GATE PARK.

RIGHT. TOGETHER. POWER COUPLE-ISH. I MEAN, CAN IT WORK?

I...SORRY, MY MIND KEEPS GOING TO GILES PLACES AND IT'S...OH, MAN. IT'S BAD AND SAD.

BUT ME AND DEVON COULD MAKE IT WORK. PLANNING AND FIGHTING AND BOYFRIENDING.

I DUNNO, BILLY. I THINK YOU NEED TO WATCH OUT.

BUT WHY?

WATCH OUT!

I'LL GET THIS ONE!

YOU'LL GET AWAY FROM THAT ONE! BACK BACK BACK!

SOMETIMES IT'S EASIER TO DO IT ALONE...

BECAUSE IF YOU FIGHT ALONGSIDE SOMEONE YOU LOVE...

PAFF

...YOU END UP TRYING TO PROTECT EACH OTHER.

LOVE MAKES YOU TAKE CHANCES. AND WHEN YOU'RE THE SLAYER, IF YOU RISK YOURSELF, YOU'RE RISKING THE PROTECTION FOR THE WORLD.

YOU DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO RISK THAT.

PAFF

WAIT!

OUT OF THE WAY!

BUT I HAVE HIM!

BAM

I GOT HIM! I TOLD YOU!

WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE.

AND WE NEED TO BREAK UP.

WHAT DID YOU SAY? BECAUSE IT SOUNDED LIKE--

SOMETIMES A SLAYER HAS TO WRITE OFF WHAT THEY CAN'T SAVE.

WHAT'S THAT?

BLAMMM

DAD! DAD!

YOU KNOW *SHOOTING* DOESN'T DO ANY GOOD! WHY ARE YOU EVEN *HERE?*

THEY'RE SWARMING OUT THERE! I DID WHAT YOU SAID, BUT THEN...I COULDN'T LET THEM TAKE MY HOME!

WHO'S THIS?

I'M BILLY. I CAN HELP. THERE'S MORE COMING FROM UPSTAIRS. WE SHOULD GET OUT.

THIS YOUR BOYFRIEND?

NO.

HE'S A SLAYER.

HE *DUMPED* YOU?

NOT DUMPED. NO DUMPING. NO SHOOTING OR DUMPING. IT'S MUTUAL.

KILL THAT.

IT'S *NOT* MUTUAL.

YOU CAN'T MAKE SOMETHING MUTUAL BY CALLING IT MUTUAL.

STOP THAT, SIR, ***PLEASE!***

YOU DON'T GET TO PICK MY FEELINGS ABOUT THIS, BILLY.

FINE! ***WHATEVER!*** BUT RIGHT NOW WE ARE IN ***TERRIBLE*** DANGER, SO YOU BOTH HAVE TO LISTEN.

DEVON, TEXT KATIE. TELL THEM WHAT'S GOING ON. UM...DEVON'S DAD, CAN YOU PLEASE CHECK THE BACK DOOR?

WITHOUT USING THE GUN.

SO WE KNOW WHAT WE'RE DOING, RIGHT?

CLASSIC HAN SOLO. GET IN THERE AND PLUCK 'EM OUT.

I'M READY.

OKAY, SKY. GO WHEN I SAY--

WAIT!

IT'S A TEXT FROM DEVON. "ZOMPIRES ARE SWARMING THE HOUSE."

THANKS EVER SO MUCH, DEVON.

LET'S GO.

STEP ON IT, SKY!

TROOF

GRRRRRRHH

GO, GO, GO!

WAIT!

SKREEEEEEE

I HAVE A BETTER IDEA.

RAM

YOU DON'T GET A NICE BREAKUP JUST BECAUSE YOUR INTENTIONS ARE GOOD. YOU GET AN UGLY, GUILTY BREAKUP, BECAUSE YOUR REASONS ARE STUPID.

I DON'T WANT TO. YOU *KNOW* I DON'T.

SO, DON'T!

I CHOSE TO BE A SLAYER, AND I WANT TO BE WITH YOU. BUT I CAN'T DO BOTH.

WHO SAYS? *BUFFY?*

HEY, I ADORE HER AS A PERSON AND AS A STRONG BLOND CONCEPT, BUT THIS TIME, SHE'S WRONG.

DEVON, I COULD LOSE THE WORLD, TRYING TO SAVE YOU.

YOU MEAN EVERYTHING TO ME.

I MEAN MORE THAN THE WORLD?

YEAH. YOU DO.

I WOULD LET THE WORLD GO UP IN FLAMES TO SAVE YOU. SO...I CAN'T...I CAN'T BE BOTH. I'M SORRY.

HEY, GUYS?

GUYS?

I'M SORRY, TOO.

I DIDN'T SEE ANY AT THE BACK DOOR, SO I LOOKED OUTSIDE. CELLAR DOOR'S ALL SMASHED IN.

SO YOU MEAN...

THEY'RE IN THE BASEMENT.

THEY'RE RIGHT UNDER US!

kr akrakrak

Uff

ALMOST DONE?!

ALMOST!

Uff

LET'S GO!

VROOM

RRRMM

BAM

STAB

BOOM

CRUNCH

KRAK

DAD!

I'M LOSING COUNT OF ALL THE DIFFERENT WAYS I'M LOSING HIM.

KRAK

DEVON CALLED AND ASKED ME TO COME BACK AND HELP MY HOMETOWN FROM BEING OVERRUN. I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THIS FALLING-INTO-A-BASEMENT-FILLED-WITH-DEATH THING.

OOF.

OW.

PABLAMMM!

NO FLOOR! NO FLOOR!

SOMETIMES YOU THINK THINGS CAN'T GET WORSE, AND THEN...

...MICROBUS.

CRSHH

JUST CLIMB UP INSIDE THE VAN. YOU CAN DO IT!

WHAT'S BURNING DOWN THERE?

WHO'S HURT?! WHERE'S DEVON?

IS SKY OKAY?

UERRRGH.

HELP MY DAD!

I'M GOOD. GO GET HIM.

YOU'LL NEVER GET TO HIM!

TRY TO STOP ME.

LIKE THIS?

I THOUGHT I HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN SAVING DEVON AND BEING A SLAYER. BUT I FOUND A WAY TO FAIL AT BOTH.

I HAVE TO SAVE HIM!

AND THEN...THE BASEMENT DISAPPEARS. AND I AM SOMEWHERE COLD. OLD AND COLD.

I SAID, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

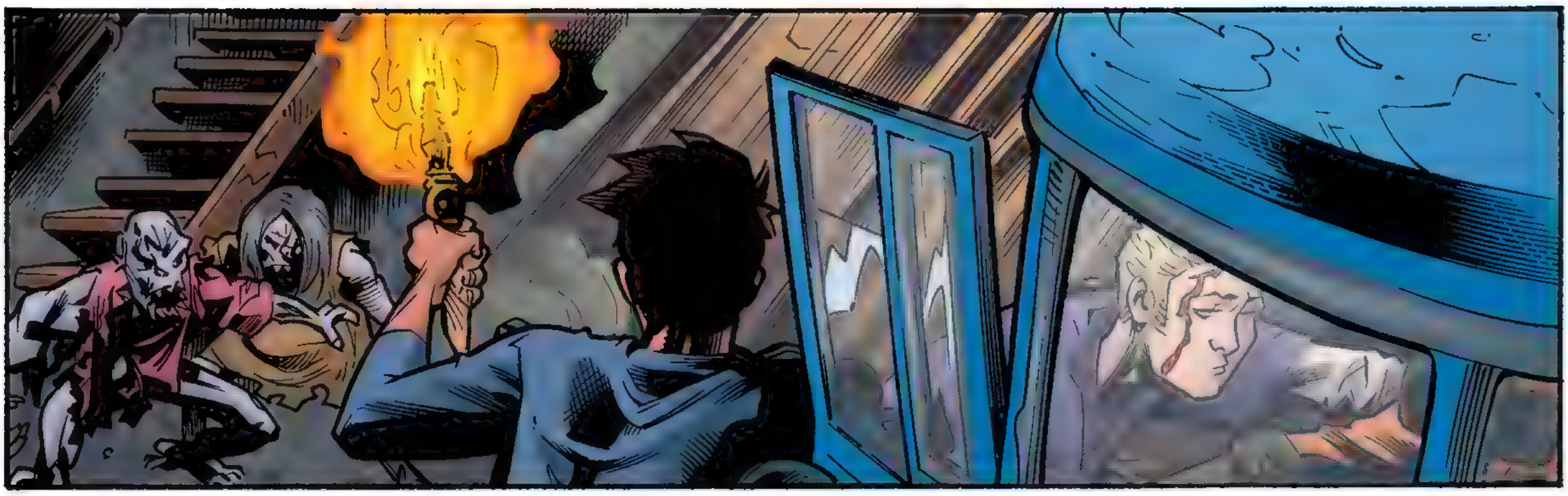
WHOOSH
GET AWAY FROM MY BOYFRIEND!

YOU OKAY? I THINK YOU'RE OKAY.

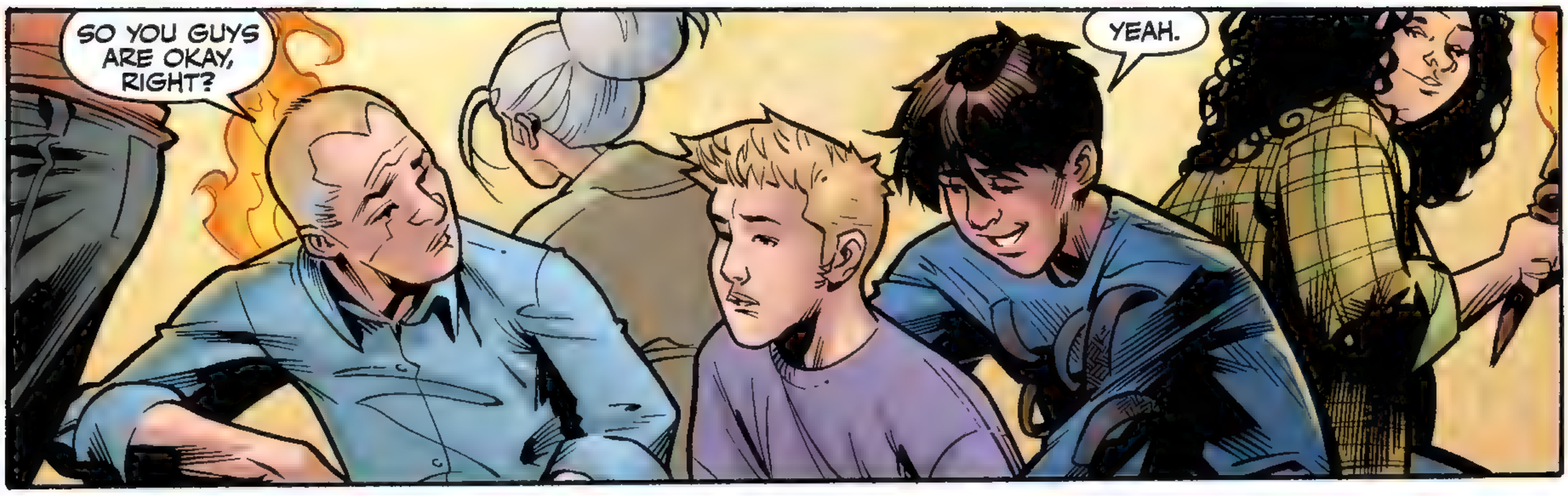
WHAT HAPPENED?

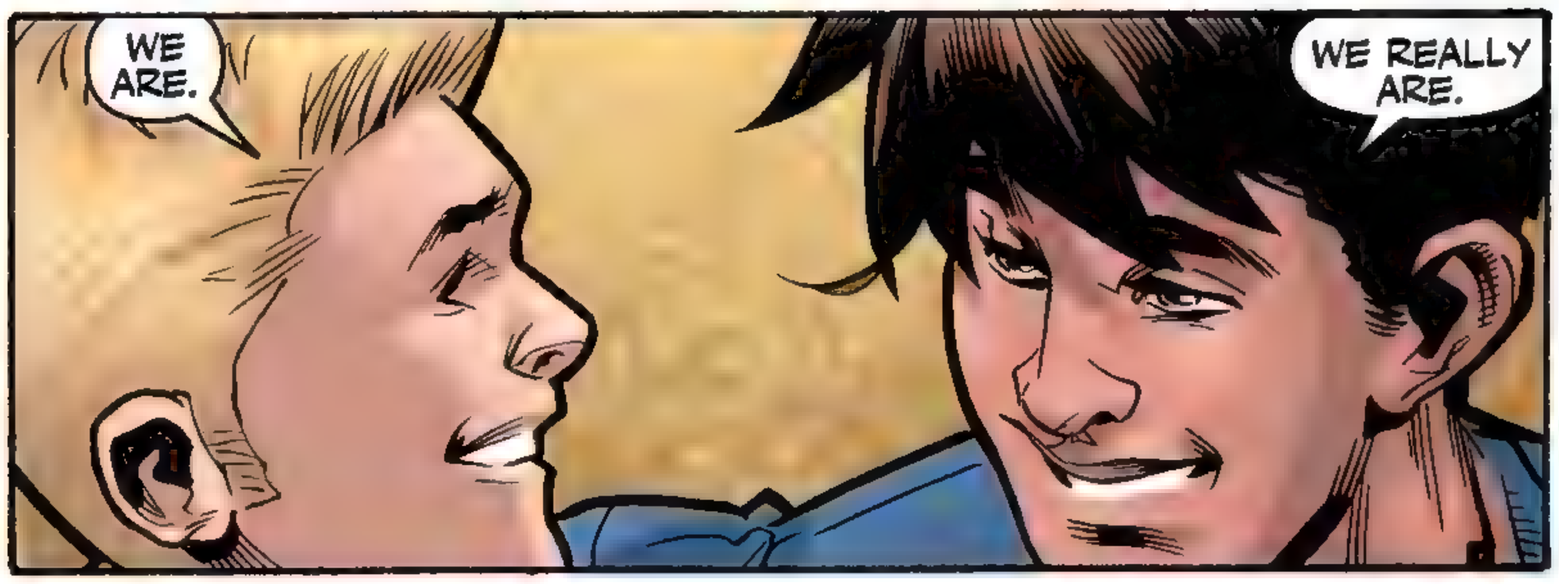
I PUT YOU FIRST. AND THE WORLD CAME ALONG FOR THE RIDE. I GUESS SOMETIMES WE SLAYERS HAVE TO CUT OUR LOSSES...

...AND SOMETIMES WE HAVE TO TRUST OUR INSTINCTS.



HE'S OKAY.
EVERYONE TAKE A TORCH!


SO YOU GUYS ARE OKAY, RIGHT?
YEAH.


WE ARE.
WE REALLY ARE.

FIRE. IT MAKES PERFECT SENSE. BEFORE INVITATIONS, HELL, BEFORE DOORS, THAT WAS HOW YOU KEPT THE OUTSIDE THINGS OUTSIDE.

IT LOOKS KINDA PRETTY!

WE'RE GETTING THE WORD OUT EVERYWHERE.

EVERYTHING JUST GOT A LITTLE EASIER.

THANKS TO MY MAN.

I WAS SO SCARED FOR DEVON, BUT I COULDN'T GET TO HIM AND THAT JUST SORT OF...I DUNNO. I JUST SORT OF SAW THIS GIRL, A KIND OF...PRIMITIVE SLAYER, I GUESS. I COULD, LIKE, SEE HER, IN A CAVE...AND I KNEW HOW TO STOP THEM. IT WAS LIKE, INSTEAD OF BEING PUNISHED FOR BEING IN LOVE, I WAS BEING...

"PRIMITIVE"?

...REWARDED...

BILLY, THE FIRST SLAYER IS CALLED THE PRIMITIVE. DID YOU HAVE... SOME KIND OF... *VISION?*

DID I?

"IN LOVE"?

WAIT--VISION? BUT, HOW...? HE'S NOT A *CALLED* SLAYER. HE'S NOT HOOKED INTO ALL THAT MYTHOLOGY.

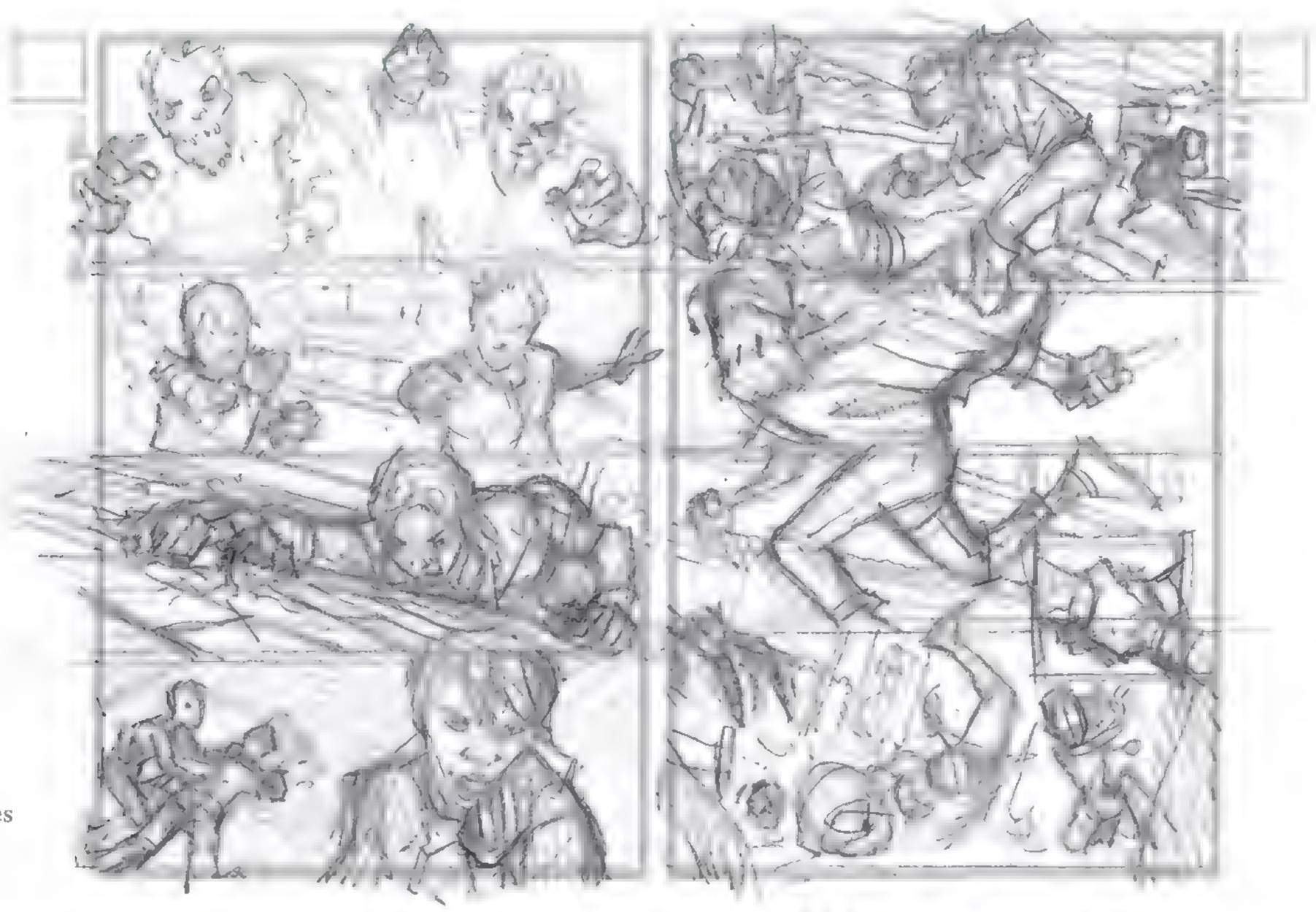
BUT MAYBE SOMETHING OUT THERE HOOKED INTO *HIM.*

Buffy the Vampire Slayer™

SEASON 9 SKETCHBOOK AND COVER GALLERY

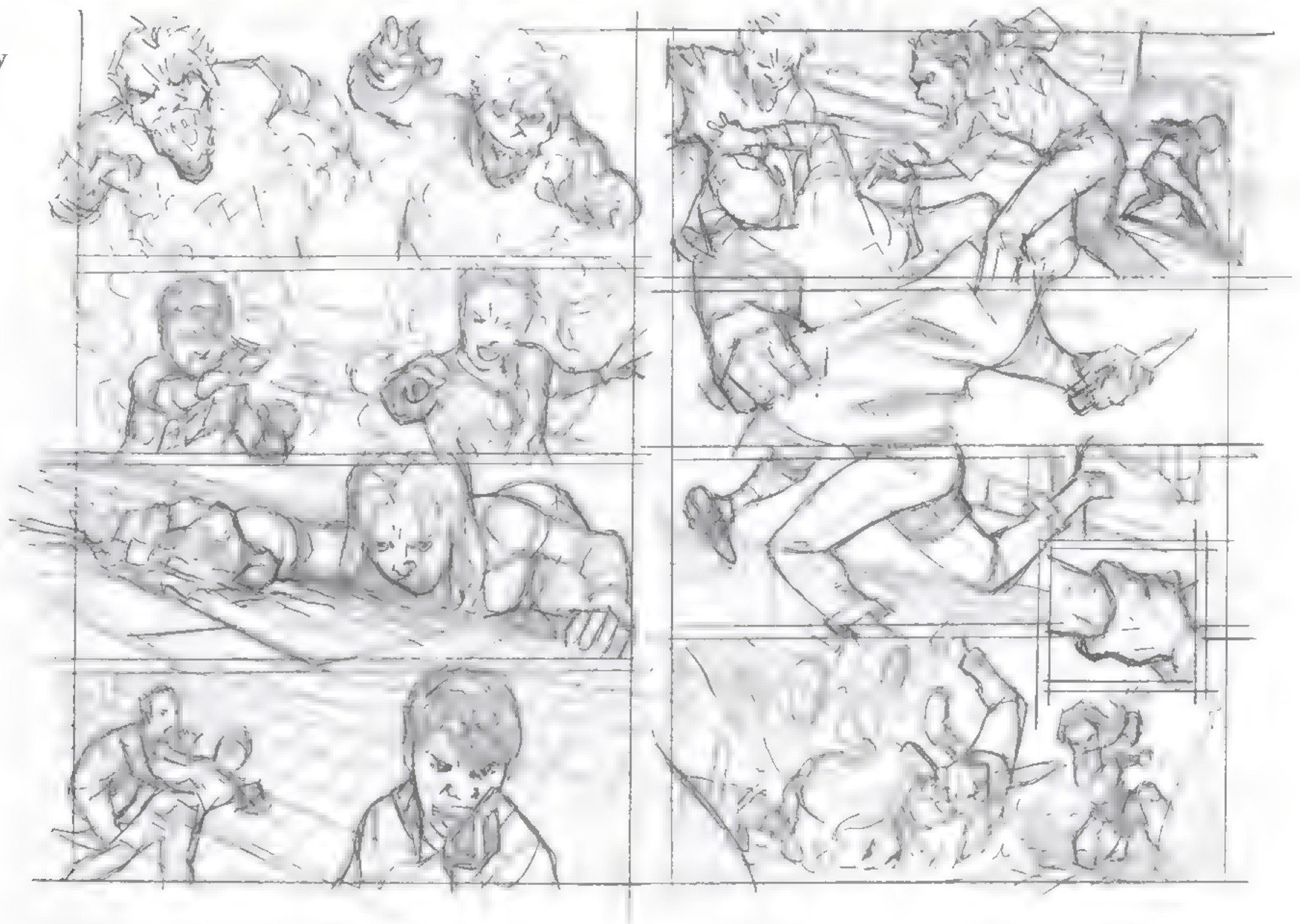
Featuring art by **GEORGES JEANTY** *with*

JO CHEN **MICHELLE MADSEN** **KARL STORY** **DEXTER VINES**



Right: Rough layouts and not-quite-final pencils from Georges Jeanty for pages 3 and 4 from issue #16.

Opposite: *Buffy* Season 9 #16 final variant cover art. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Dexter Vines, and colors by Michelle Madsen.



Below: Sketches by Georges Jeanty working out the Slayer's expressions for a few scenes in issues #16 and #17, as well as profile sketches of Koh, Buffy, and Illyria for the issue #17 variant cover art.

Opposite: *Buffy* Season 9 #17 final variant cover art. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Dexter Vines, and colors by Michelle Madsen.

GEORGES
VITES

We're on Buffy as she turns to walk away from the group. Over her shoulder, we can see Illyria and the rest of The Council.

1/BUFFY: I've heard it all before--how it's my fault that ninety-nine point nine-nine percent of the world is magically impaired--but that's not going to guilt me into joining your after-school club.

Panel Two

Back on the Council. The little girl with the balloon holds out her hand with the balloon. The speech dialogue comes from the balloon.

2/BALLOON: This is not about blame, Buffy Summers.

3/BALLOON: This is about giving you a chance to repair the damage that has been done to this realm.

Panel Three.

Illyria is suddenly in front of Buffy, stopping her from leaving.

2/BUFFY: I'm doing that. I've got my own battles to fight. And right now, they're in San Francisco. Dusting zompires alongside my friends.

3/ILLYRIA: That melee is over. Your friends no longer require your help.

Panel Four:

Over Buffy, who has turned back to the Council. D'Hoffryn leans forward.

4/D'HOFFRYN: And, Buffy, you are mistaken about The Council's purpose.

5/D'HOFFRYN: We are fighting **your** battle.

Panel Five:

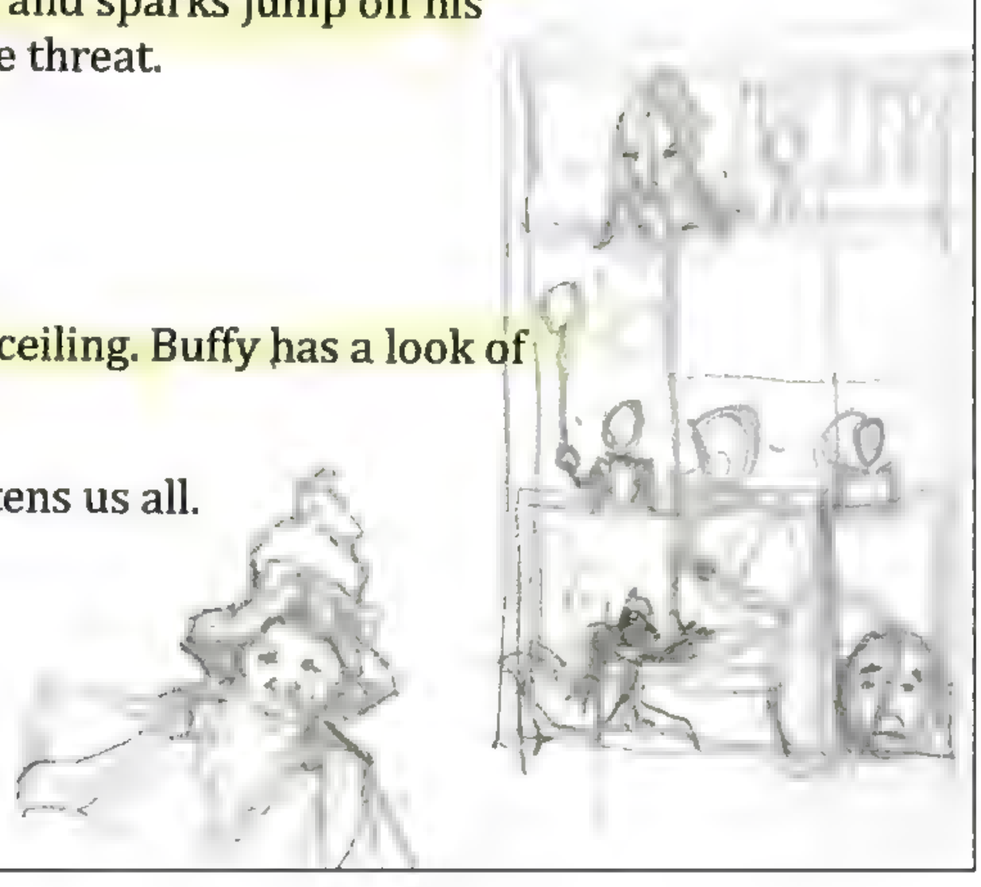
Wide shot. One of the bigger panels on the page. The wizard holds up his hand. Resting in his palm is a magical crystal. Light projects from the crystal, hitting the dome of the planetarium. The starscape is now gone, replaced with an image of Severin. It covers the entire dome. Severin's eyes glow and sparks jump off his hands. He should look slightly unhinged – a formidable threat.

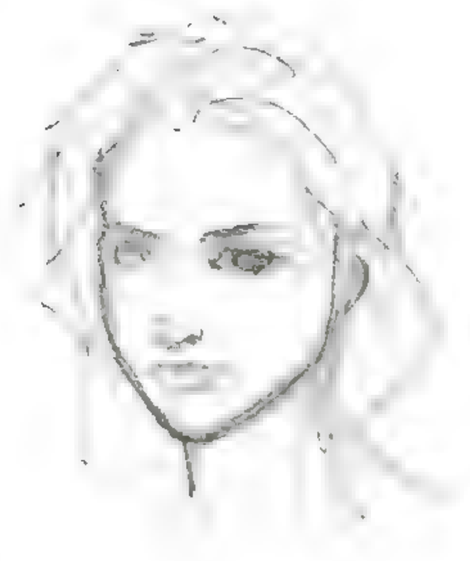
6/D'HOFFRYN: One you left unfinished.

Panel Six:

Close on Buffy as she looks up at Severin's face on the ceiling. Buffy has a look of dread on her face.

8/D'HOFFRYN: (off-panel) One that now threatens us all.





Opposite: The script for page 7 of issue #17, highlighted by Georges Jeanty to call out panel numbers, panel content, and dialogue space needed per panel. Plus, an early thumbnail of the page.

Above: A more detailed thumbnail of page 7, alongside pages 5, 6, and 8.

Left: The final page, inked by Dexter Vines.

Buffy Season 9 #18 final variant cover art. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Dexter Vines, and colors by Michelle Madsen.

Buffy Season 9 #19 final variant cover art. Pencils and inks by Georges Jeanty and colors by Michelle Madsen.

Buffy Season 9 #20 final variant cover art. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Dexter Vines, and colors by Michelle Madsen.

Buffy Season 9 Volume 4: *Welcome to the Team* cover art by Jo Chen.

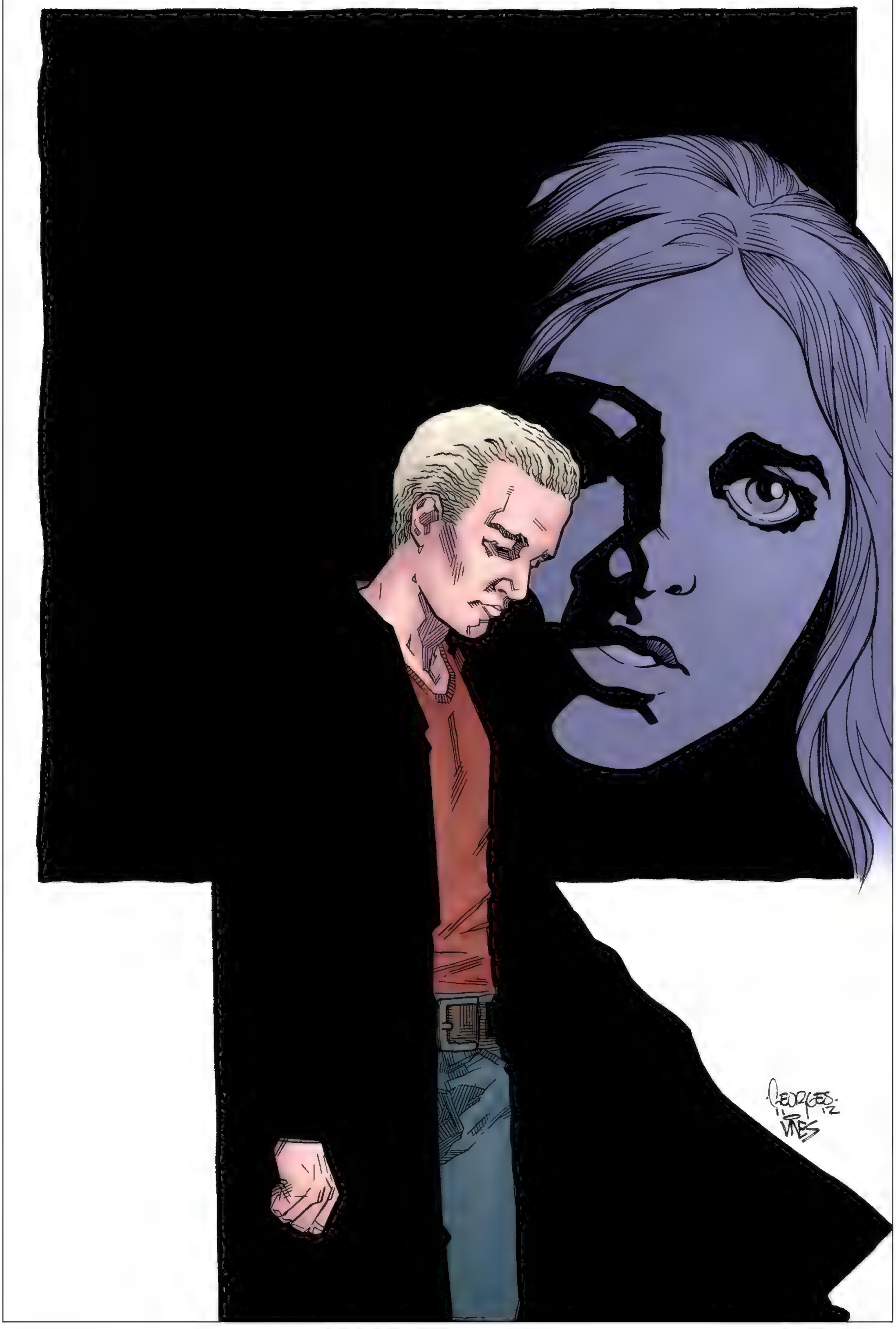
Cover layout by Georges Jeanty for the *Buffy* Season 9 #21 variant cover.

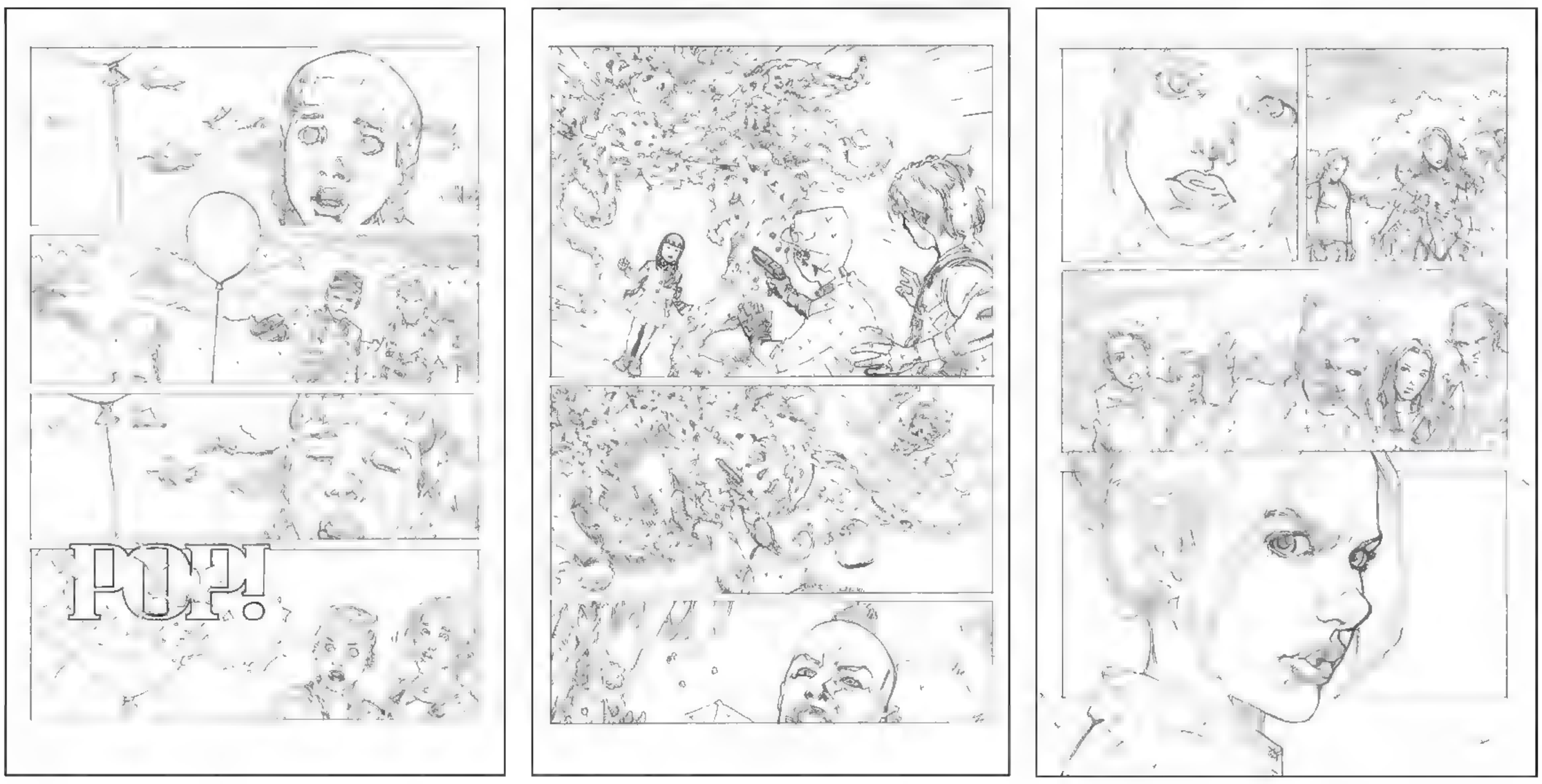
The final cover. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Dexter Vines, and colors by Michelle Madsen.

Left: Studies of Spike and Buffy by Georges Jeanty for the *Buffy* Season 9 #22 variant cover.

Below: Additional sketches for the issue #22 variant.

Opposite: The final cover. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Dexter Vines, and colors by Michelle Madsen.

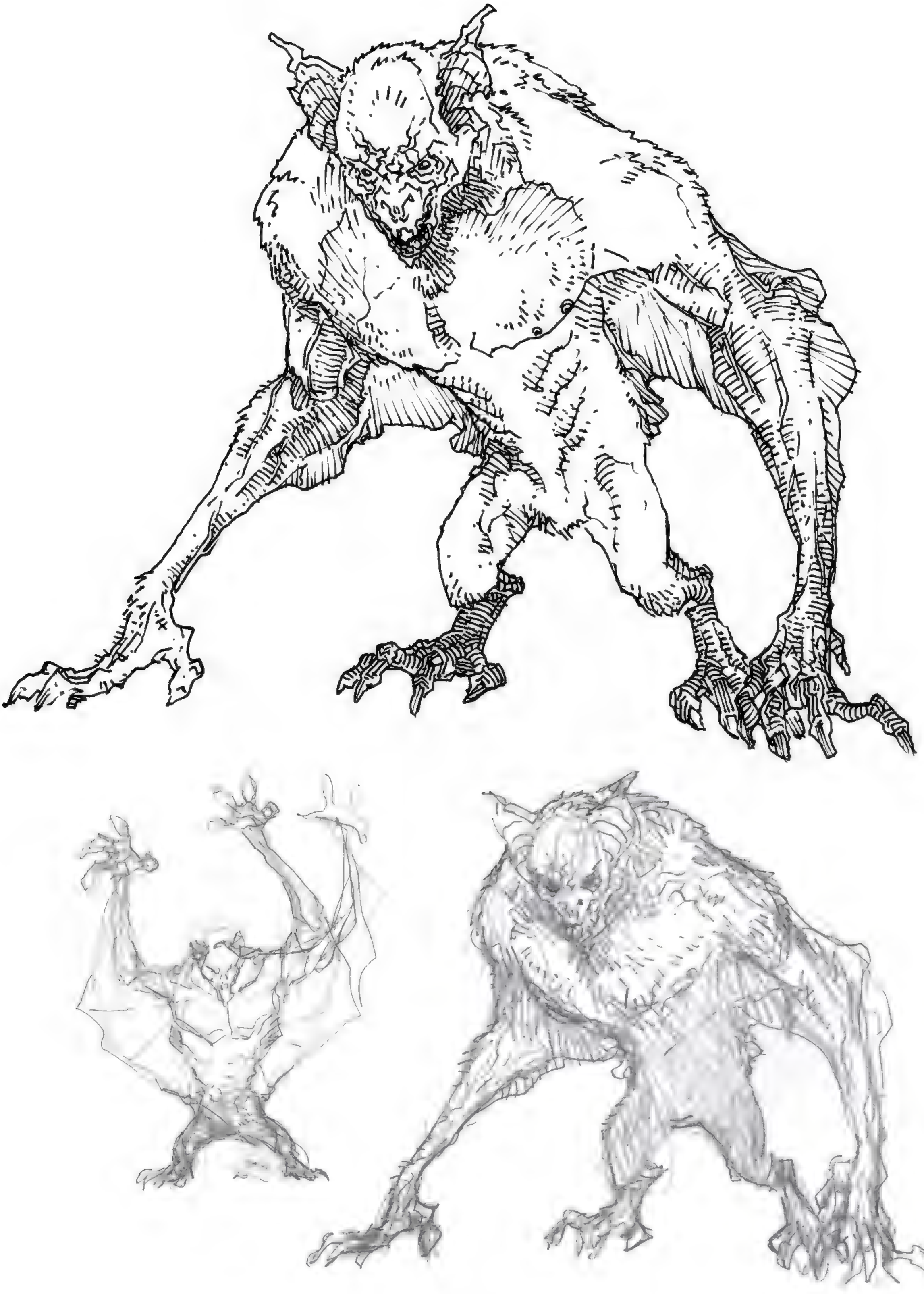

GEORGES
12



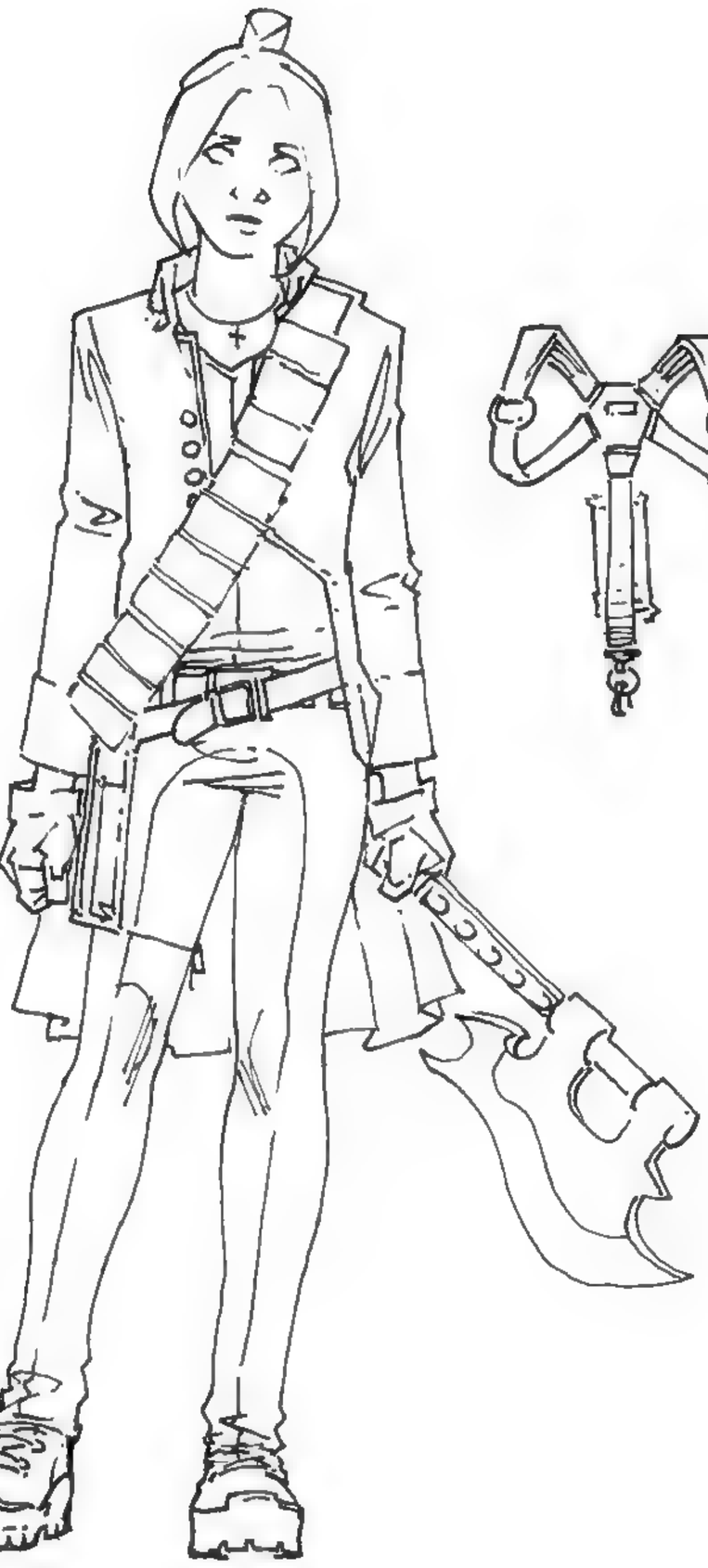
Top: The tight sketch of the *Buffy* Season 9 #23 variant cover by Georges Jeanty.

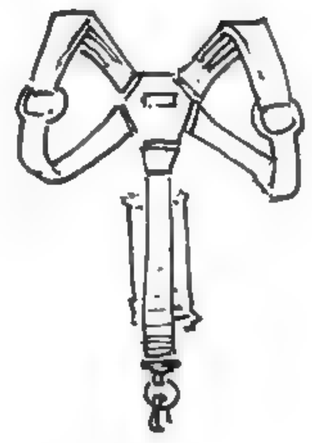
Above: Pencils by Georges Jeanty for *Buffy* Season 9 #22, pages 5, 6, and 24.

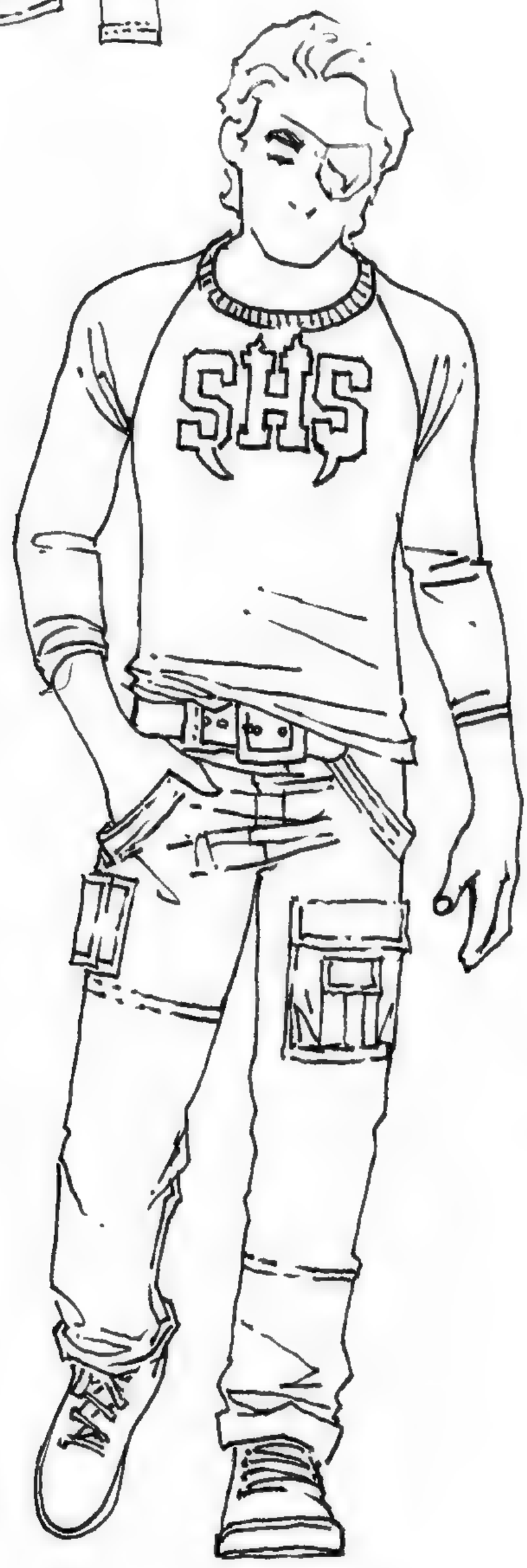
Buffy Season 9 #23 final variant cover art. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Karl Story, and colors by Michelle Madsen.



Part bat, part vampire, 100 percent evil god. Here are Georges Jeanty's designs for the Old One Maloker.

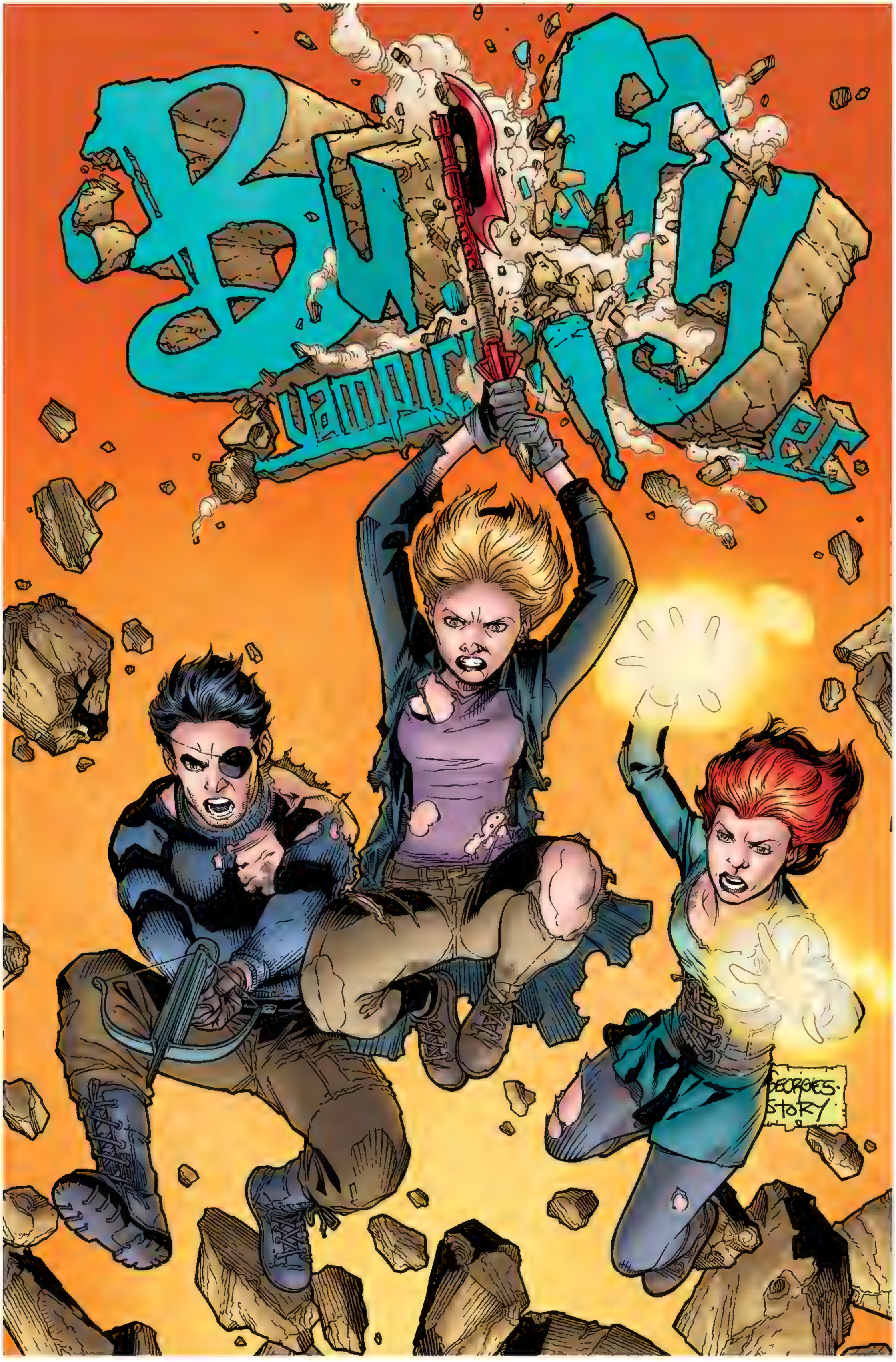






Special outfit designs by Georges Jeanty for the core Scoobies in the final battle.

Buffy Season 9 #24 final variant cover art. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Karl Story, and colors by Michelle Madsen.



Buffy Season 9 #25 final variant cover art. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Karl Story, and colors by Michelle Madsen.

Buffy Season 9 Volume 5: *The Core* cover art by Jo Chen.

CREATOR BIOGRAPHIES

Writer, producer, and director JOSS WHEDON began writing feature films and acting as a "script doctor" in the 1990s. He introduced the character for which he is most well known in his script for the original *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* film (1992).

In 1997 Whedon founded Mutant Enemy Productions so that he could coproduce the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. The series ran from 1997 to 2003, giving birth to Whedon's cultlike fan following, and led to a spinoff series, *Angel*, as well as comics series based on both shows. In 2002, Whedon produced and wrote the television series *Firefly*, which eventually led to a feature film titled *Serenity* (2005), as well as more comics. In 2008, Whedon produced and cowrote, with his brothers Zack and Jed Whedon, and Maurissa Tancharoen, the Emmy-winning online series *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*—again leading to a comics series. Also alongside Jed Whedon and Tancharoen, Whedon produced the television show *Dollhouse*, which premiered in 2009. His most recently produced television work, which he cocreated with Jed Whedon and Tancharoen in 2013, is Marvel's *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* He wrote and directed one of the most ambitious and successful feature films to date: *The Avengers*, based on the Marvel Comics superhero team, along with its sequel, *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. He also directed, produced, and composed original music for a film adaptation of the Shakespeare play *Much Ado about Nothing*.

Comics written by Whedon include *Fray* and *Buffy* Seasons 8 and 9, both series based in the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* universe, and *Sugarshock*, all for Dark Horse Comics, and *Runaways* and *Astonishing X-Men* for Marvel Comics.

Writer and producer ANDREW CHAMBLISS began his career as an assistant to the executive producers of the television series *Crossing Jordan* and *Heroes*, after which he worked as a story editor on the short-lived remake of *The Bionic Woman*. In 2011 he joined the writing staff of *Dollhouse* and continued as writer and story editor, scripting the series finale, "Epitaph Two: Return," as well as cowriting the comic-book series with Jed Whedon and Maurissa Tancharoen at Dark Horse Comics. He has also written for *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* and *The Vampire Diaries*, and currently works on the staff of *Once Upon a Time* as a writer and coproducer. Chambliss was the primary writer for Season 9 of the *Buffy* comics series and has stated that *Buffy* was instrumental in making him want to become a writer.

Best known as a writer and producer for a variety of science-fiction television series, JANE ESPENSON first attempted to enter the field by submitting several spec scripts to *Star Trek: The Next Generation* while she was a graduate student at University of California–Berkeley. In 1992 she was given a spot in the Disney Writing Fellowship, which led to work on ABC's *Dinosaurs* and Touchstone Television's *Monty*. From there, in 1997, she became a writer and producer for the sitcom *Ellen*. A year later, Espenson applied for a position on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and became executive story editor in the show's third season. Espenson remained with the show through its final (seventh) season. She wrote or cowrote twenty-three episodes; "Conversations with Dead People," cowritten with Drew Goddard, won a 2003 Hugo Award. *Buffy* also brought Espenson to the comics world. She wrote several stories for Dark Horse Comics' *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* series and the related comics *Tales of the Slayers* and *Tales of the Vampires*. After *Buffy*, Espenson wrote and produced for a variety of TV series, including *Firefly*, *The O.C.*, *Gilmore Girls*, *Tru Calling*, and *Jake in Progress*, before joining the staff of Syfy's *Battlestar Galactica* remake in its fourth season as co-executive producer. She remained with the series through the remainder of its episodes and two television movies, and then took on executive producer duties for the spinoff, *Caprica*. While working on *Battlestar*, Joss Whedon's *Dollhouse*, *Caprica*, and other series, she returned to the world of comics with *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 8. In 2011, Espenson joined ABC's new series *Once Upon a Time* as consulting producer and writer, and is still currently with the program. Also in 2011, Espenson launched her first independent web series with cocreator Brad Bell, *Husbands*. The critically acclaimed and award-winning series has run for three seasons, and led to the creation of an inventive six-part comics series written by Espenson and Bell and published by Dark Horse.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer Season 8 and Season 9 series artist GEORGES JEANTY studied fine arts at Miami Dade University; the pursuit of a career in comics was a logical choice for his artistic talents. In 1993 he broke into the world of comics with *Paradigm* #1 from Caliber Comics, and soon was penciling for London Night Studios.

Moving to Atlanta, Georgia, in 1994, Jeanty joined Gaijin Studios and began to work regularly for DC Comics on titles such as *Green Lantern*, *Superboy*, and *Superman*. His first ongoing series came in 1999 with Marvel Comics' *Bishop: The Last X-Man*, and was followed by work on *Gambit*, *Deadpool*, and *Weapon X*. In 2003, Jeanty left Gaijin Studios and formed Studio Revolver with fellow artists Dexter Vines, Tom Feister, and Tariq Hassan. The year 2006 brought Jeanty the critically acclaimed comics miniseries *The American Way*, a controversial sixties-era series written by screenwriter John Ridley and released through WildStorm. Soon after the success of *The American Way*, Jeanty was approached by Dark Horse Comics to be the regular series artist for *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 8—for which he had been handpicked by Joss Whedon. Georges Jeanty's run as the artist for Season 8 was critically acclaimed, and the series received the 2008 Eisner Award for Best New Series. Jeanty continued as the regular series artist for *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 9, and recently was the artist for the series *Serenity: Firefly Class 03-K64—Leaves on the Wind*.

Best known for his work in the *Buffy* universe, comic artist KARL MOLINE's first project with series creator Joss Whedon was the 2003 miniseries *Fray*, from Dark Horse Comics, set in the future of Buffy's world. With the canonical return of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in comics with Season 8, Moline was again brought in to draw a *Buffy/Fray* crossover arc in issues #16–#19, as well as a Season 8 *Willow* one-shot, a *Riley* one-shot, and single issues in *Buffy* Seasons 9 and 10. His other work for Dark Horse includes a *B.P.R.D.: War on Frogs* one-shot in 2008 and the miniseries *B.P.R.D.: The Dead Remembered* in 2011. Moline has also done work for other comics publishers, such as Marvel Comics (including *Avengers Academy*, *The Loners: The Secret Lives of Super Heroes*, *Spider-Man Unlimited*, *X-Factor*, and *X-Men*).

THE CORE: Inks, pages 127–148 and 151–174, by Dexter Vines; inks, pages 177–200, 203–226, and 229–252, by Karl Story.

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This story takes place after the events of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 8, created by Joss Whedon.

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SEASON 9 VOLUME 3

WILL MAGIC BE REBORN?

When she is suddenly transported in mid-slay, Buffy finds that the Siphon has regained his strength and is becoming an increasingly powerful adversary—and she has been recruited by Illyria and a mystical council to be part of a team brought together to take him down before he absorbs whatever remnants of magic he can find.

Meanwhile, the world's loss of magic hits closer to home for Buffy when Dawn falls seriously ill. Buffy's discovery that Dawn's life is in danger brings her home, and the surprising, yet timely, return of Willow brings the team back together. The battle with the Siphon is put aside—or so they think—while the team focuses on finding a supernatural cure for Dawn. Traveling to the Deeper Well, Buffy and her friends will fight new enemies and old in a battle that will change the shape of the world . . .

As Buffy and her team fight to save Dawn, Billy the Vampire Slayer fights his own crucial battle with the help of his Watcher and the Slayer Anaheed to save his small town of Santa Rosita from a plague of zompires.

"Moline's pencils are tight and well-shaped, and Espenson's characters sound like real people with real problems that also just happen to fight vampires."

—COMIC BOOK RESOURCES

"Chambliss balances out the plot's heavier themes with a sprinkling of lighthearted frivolity . . . Billy, the much-discussed boy Slayer, sees his own character arc come to a significant turning point amidst all the zompire madness. *BTVS* has always been about imparting real-world life lessons with the aid of a few fantastical creatures."

—IGN

"*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 9 #25 is exactly the finale [the season] deserves. It's a culmination of this volume that leaves me grinning ear to ear as I find myself with no choice but to write: Bring on Season 10!"

—UNLEASH THE FANBOY

DARK HORSE BOOKS

COMICS & GRAPHIC NOVELS / HORROR

JOSS WHEDON
ANDREW CHAMBLISS
GEORGES JEANTY

Buffy the Vampire Slayer™

SEASON 9 VOLUME 3

JANE ESPENSON
KARL MOLINE

"[Season 9] has a back to basics feel that long time fans can't help but love."

—COMIC BOOK THERAPY

Rededicated to the Slayer mission, Buffy patrols the dangerous streets of San Francisco, working to eradicate the zompire population. When she finds out that the Siphon is back and becoming an increasingly powerful adversary, she becomes a reluctant recruit who joins forces with Illyria and a mystical council to take him down.

But when Dawn falls seriously ill, Buffy puts aside the battle with the Siphon to save her sister. The return of Willow reunites her with the Slayer and Xander as they work together on finding a supernatural cure for Dawn. Their journey will take them to the Deeper Well, where they will fight new enemies and old in a battle that will change the shape of the world . . .

Acclaimed writers Andrew Chambliss (*Once Upon a Time*) and Jane Espenson (*Husbands, Once Upon a Time*), along with artists Georges Jeanty (*Serenity: Leaves on the Wind*) and Karl Moline (*Fray*), take Joss Whedon's Buffy on a powerful journey of self-discovery.

"Very enjoyable, and the fandom will eat it up."

—BLOODY DISGUSTING

"['Love vs. Life' is] the stuff of classic *Buffy* television episodes."

—NEWSARAMA

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SON OF ULTRON

"THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"